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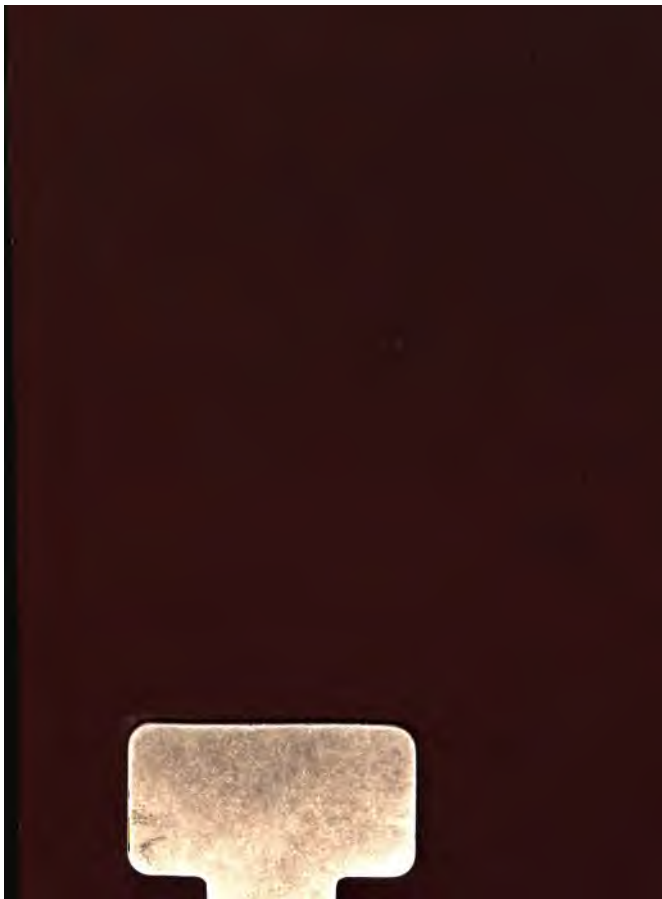
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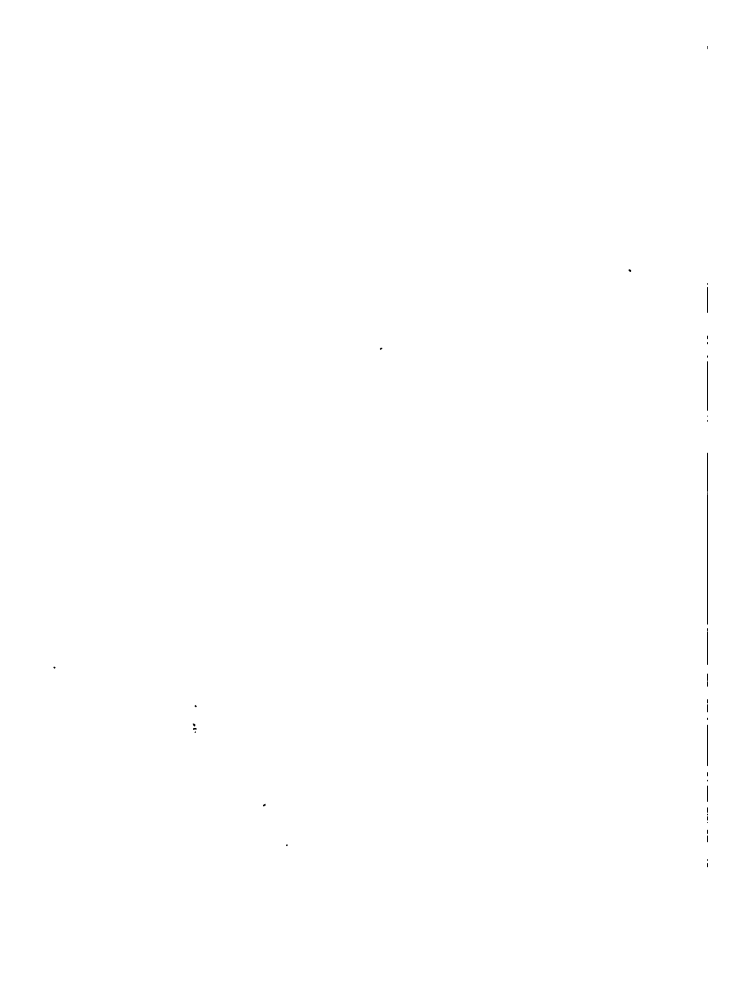








HOLY LIVING



HOLY LIVING

*A Year Book of Thoughts from the
Works of*

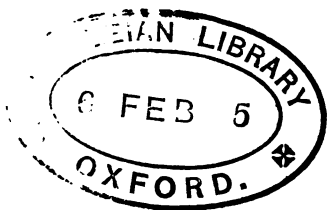
JEREMY TAYLOR

With an Introduction by
F. W. FARRAR, D.D., F.R.S.
ARCHDEACON OF WESTMINSTER



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INTRODUCTION.

BY common consent the Church of God has recognised the usefulness of devotional books. In every age they have been produced, and at some epochs in large numbers. But it is only a few among them which have attracted universal attention, and been found, by the experience of Christians, to be permanently useful. It may be said, in disparagement of such books, that in the Holy Scriptures we can find all that is necessary for the soul's food, and that the manna will never be exhausted from those sacred fields. Yet nothing is more certain than that the Scriptures were never intended to silence and exclude all other spiritual and moral teaching. The Holy Spirit of God exercises a living and abiding influence, and in all ages, entering into holy souls, maketh them sons of God and prophets. The great promise of God—"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh"—was not

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exhausted, as in a moment, by the gleaming fires and rushing wind of Pentecost. In every Christian age it remains true that "your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." No great and holy book is ever written without the inspiration of the Spirit of God; least of all, those books which, age after age, have helped to make thousands wise unto salvation.

Among such books a very small number have acquired special esteem, and have, so to speak, taken their places among the forces which tend to the amelioration of the world. The *Confessions of St. Augustine*, with their African intensity and heart-searching faithfulness, have stirred the remorse of many a penitent. The *De Imitatione Christi*, that voice from the far-off Middle Ages, still calls us clearly to meditation and self-denial. The *Thoughts* of Blaise Pascal show us how we may face the awful problem presented by the grandeur of the Divine Law as contrasted with the depth of the world's moral disorder. The *Introduction to the Devout Life*, by St. Francis de Sales, allures us by its singular sweetness and cheerfulness. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* describes to men, in many languages, the path from the City of Destruction to the Heavenly Jerusalem. Baxter's *Saint's Rest*, with its tone of pleading earnestness;

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Wilson's *Sacra Privata*, with its lucid simplicity and calm good sense; Sir Thomas Browne's *Rdigio Medici*, with its quaintness and earnestness; Keble's *Christian Year*, with its soothing restfulness;—these books have, in a very high degree, helped forward the Christian life, and made men more earnest in the discipline of their souls. Side by side with them, inferior perhaps as a whole to none of them, we may place the *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* of Bishop Jeremy Taylor. If we might feel inclined to claim for the “brief quivering sentences” of the *Imitatione* a more unique place in devotional literature, we may remember that the type of piety represented by that little “golden Passional” is almost exclusively ascetic and monastic; that it leaves unconsidered some great spheres of Christian duty. When John Wesley felt the limitations and deficiencies of the mediæval recluse, his heart was stirred to its inmost depths by the works of the English Bishop. They led him to dedicate all his thoughts, words, and actions to God, and they thus earned the high honour of contributing directly as well as indirectly to the great modern revival of religious life.

Bishop Jeremy Taylor would not have reckoned the *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying* among his greatest or most memorable works. Both of them were occasional in their origin. The former was written

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amid the troubles and confusions of revolution and civil war, "to supply to the few good people who still remained a collection of holy precepts which might less make them feel the want of personal guidance; since they would not always have a prophet at their needs, nor be suffered to go up to the House of the Lord to enquire of the appointed oracles." The *Holy Dying* was written to console his friend and patron, Lord Carbery, for the death of his wife, who in her youth had been the Lady Alice Egerton of Milton's *Comus*. Both treatises are simple in their structure and in their aims; but

"Wisdom is oft-times nearer when we stoop
Than when we soar;"

and, valuable as are all the other books of the most eloquent Bishop, he exercised a deeper and wider influence by these devotional works than by any of his other writings, except perhaps his mighty plea for toleration in the *Liberty of Prophesying*. In the many exquisite passages gathered under the title of *Holy Living* in this little selection, the reader will, however, find extracts, not from these two treatises only, but from all the nine volumes of Jeremy Taylor's collected works.

A few words will perhaps help some of those who may not be familiar with the Bishop's style to

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appreciate the characteristics of the intellectual and spiritual banquet which is here provided for them.

1. In all these extracts they will not find a word of sectarianism or intolerance. The mind of Bishop Jeremy Taylor was eminently catholic and comprehensive. He had as great a contempt as Milton himself for charges of imaginary heresy and "the subdichotomies of petty schisms." He did not believe in the necessity for, or the wisdom of, a theology which attempts to soar into the secrets of the Deity on waxen wings of the understanding. It is on this conviction that he grounds the arguments of his *Liberty of Prophesying*, which, with Milton's *Areopagitica* and Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants*, taught to English Churchmen the duty of mutual forbearance in matters of religion. Erasmus had already said that "the sum of our religion is peace and unanimity, which can scarcely exist unless we lay down as few definitions as possible, and in many things leave to each man his own judgment." Taylor held that the Apostle's creed is, for Christendom, the sole necessary basis of unity, and that nothing beyond it ought to be required of others as a necessity of faith; that it is wrong to make the way to Heaven narrower than God has made it; and that if God will not be angry with men for being invincibly deceived, neither ought men to be angry

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with each other. Those who read these extracts will find themselves in contact with none but necessary and fundamental truths of life and motives of action.

2. Jeremy Taylor was a man of wide learning—a rich and ripe scholar. His reading had made him “a full man.” His most casual pages are enriched with the fruits gathered by a lifelong industry. In his *Holy Living* he quotes no fewer than two hundred Greek and Latin authors, fifty-five of the Fathers, five Jewish and twenty-five Italian authors. Hence come the incessant allusions which give such incomparable vivacity to his style. Even in these pages the reader will find quotations from Theocritus, Epictetus, Seneca, Xenocrates, and Gregory Nazianzen; he will find anecdotes derived alike from the Olympic games and the kitchen of Alexander, the lives of the hermits and the worship of the Magians. Themistocles, Lysimachus, Galba, Agathocles of Sicily, Biantes of Lydia, St Veronica, Theophylact the Patriarch, and Christopher Columbus, together with many others, are made to furnish apt illustrations of moral truths. In touching upon Scripture narratives, the Bishop always assumes, on the part of his readers, a perfect familiarity with the sacred page. He refers, but does not detail, as when he talks of men who are “dull in contentions and quick in

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loving-kindnesses, swift as the feet of Asahel, and ready as the chariots of Amminadib."

3. But the Bishop wears the weight of all his learning "lightly as a flower." He is sometimes diffuse, but never dull or heavy. His sprightliness and versatility, no less than his grander endowments, entitle him to the eulogy of the poet Mason, who calls him "the Shakspeare of English prose." Speaking of a dead religion, he says, "You may reckon all the joints of a dead man, but the heart is cold, and the joints are stiff, and fit for nothing *but for the little people that creep in graves*. And so are very many men; if you sum up the accounts of their religion, it may be you shall not reprove their numbers, or find any lines unfilled in their tables of accounts. But when you have handled all this and considered, you will find at last you have taken a dead man by the hand; *there is not a finger wanting, but they are stiff as icicles*." Taylor abounds in these unexpected and Shaksperian turns of sentences, which we read as with a flash of surprise. Coleridge rightly says that "in half-a-dozen of his sermons"—and the same is true of his other writings—"there are more thoughts, more facts and images, more excitement to enquiry and intellectual effort, than are presented to the congregations of the present day in as many churches and meetings during twice as many months."

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4. He is one of the few prose-writers who deserve the name of "poet," and in whom a poetic prose is not only tolerable but exquisite. His style has been compared to "a deeply murmuring sea with the sunlight on it." His keen powers of observation, his fondness for the sights and sounds of nature, the long years which he spent in lovely and quiet country places like Uppingham and the Vale of Towey, have lent an exquisite beauty to his descriptions. There are three pictures in the following pages which it would be hard to excel even in poetry, and which in prose have not been surpassed by Mr. Ruskin himself. One is the description of sunrise :—"As when the sun approaches towards the gates of morning, and sends away the spirits of darkness, and gives light to a cock, and calls up the lark to matins, and by and by gilds the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns, like those which decked the brows of Moses . . . and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher till he shows a fair face and a full light, and then he shines one whole day, under a cloud often, and sometimes weeping great and little showers, and sets quickly; so is a man's reason and his life." Another is the picture of the lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he is rising, but beaten back by the loud sighings of an eastern wind,

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and pausing till the storm is over, and then making a prosperous flight, rising and singing "as if it had learnt music and motion from an angel as he passed sometime through the air about his ministries here below ; so is the prayer of a good man." A third is the rich painting of a rose when it is no longer fair on the morning, and full with the dew of heaven as a lamb's fleece, but 'begins to put on darkness, and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age, like the waning life of man.' It is true that these exquisite similes woke the splenetic ridicule of South. "I speak the words of truth and soberness," he says in one of his sermons. "This was the way of the Apostles in discoursing of things sacred. Nothing here of 'the fringes of the North Star;' nothing of 'Nature's becoming unnatural;' nothing of 'the down of angels' wings and the beautiful locks of cherubims;' no starched similitudes, with a 'thus have I seen a cloud rolling in its airy mansion.'" But South was a very different man from Jeremy Taylor, and the style which might have been intolerable in a man of less vivid imagination was quite natural to the poet-preacher. A very cold and critical taste may perhaps find fault with the "bubbles and flashes and electrical apparitions from the magic caldron of a fervid and ebullient fancy constantly fuelled by an unexampled opulence of language." We may wish that there

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were more "islets of smooth water" amid the "words that convey feeling, and words that flash images, and words that express notions," which all "flow together and whirl and rush onward like a stream at once rapid and full of eddies." But the great English writer who has used these comparisons,* and who has done so much to reawaken the attention of the Church to the writings of Jeremy Taylor, thinks that he was "the most eloquent of divines—had I said of men, Cicero would forgive me, and Demosthenes nod assent."

5. But it need hardly be added that Jeremy Taylor was something infinitely better than a mere stylist. He was a man of varied experience, which has left its traces in page after page of his writings. When he speaks of wounds, and battles, and prisoners, and plague, he speaks of what he had not only heard, but seen. He has learned deep and sacred lessons in the hard school of affliction. The prosperity of his life was brief; its sorrows were severe and almost continuous. He had embraced a waning cause, and followed from place to place a fugitive king. His home had been pillaged, his family driven out of doors. He had been in prisons and besieged cities. He had been compelled to support himself by keeping school in a humble village. Even when his long and

* S. T. Coleridge.

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eminent services received the poor reward of expatriation in an Irish bishopric, he was made the object of violent persecution and obloquy alike by Romanists and Dissenters, so that his office became to him "an insupportable burden in a place of torment," and it would have been better for him, he said, to be a poor curate in a village church. Further than this, his tender heart was not only torn by the early deaths of several sweet children, but he lost two sons in the prime of youth by ways which were to him unspeakably shocking. The elder was killed in a duel; the younger died from excesses learnt in the dissolute company of the Duke of Buckingham. He himself died before his time, at the early age of fifty-five. His teachings were not the outcome of mere holiday experience, but were the result of all that he had learned in a tried and suffering life. The fine workmanship of such a soul as his can only be wrought of the gold which has been thrice refined in the furnace of affliction.

6. The following extracts are entirely devotional. They are derived from pages which have no polemical object in view. In such exhortations Taylor had no desire to further any party or to win for himself applause. His one object is to raise and inspire the souls of his readers by the contemplation of heavenly truths. Here, then, we see him at his best, so far as

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he can be represented by isolated passages. It is "when he escapes into the devotional, as into a green meadow-land with springs and rivulets and sheltering groves, where he leads his flock like a shepherd," that he is most full of instructiveness and charm. In writing of the duties of a Holy Life, it seems as if his lips are touched by the seraphim with hallowed fire taken from the altar of God.

It is to be hoped that this little book may send many readers to the works of this St. Chrysostom of the English Church. Meanwhile, there are two ways in which it may be used. It may either be read through as a whole, in order that the reader may select for himself the passages which please him most, and may make them his own; or it may be used day by day as suggesting some topic for the half-forgotten act of meditation. The German poet Herder, not long before his death, said to his friends, "Give me a great thought, that I may live on it." In this book the student is furnished with many noble thoughts set to the music of noble words; and it is a useful and beautiful feature of the book, that these thoughts are appended to texts which they specially illustrate.

F. W. FARRAR.

SHORTNESS OF LIFE.

"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow."—Psa. xc. 10.

LET no man extend his thoughts, or let his hopes wander towards future and far-distant events. And as our hopes must be confined, so must our designs: let us not project long designs, crafty plots, and diggings so deep that the intrigues of a design shall never be unfolded till our grandchildren have forgotten our virtues or our vices. The work of our soul is cut short, facile, sweet, and plain, and fitted to the small portions of our shorter life.

It is fit for a man to work for his day's wages, or to contrive for the hire of a week, or to lay a train to make provisions for such a time as is within our eye, and in our duty, and within the usual periods of man's life; for whatsoever is made necessary is also made prudent: but while we plot and busy ourselves in the toils of an ambitious war, or the levies of a great estate, night enters in upon us, and tells all the world how like fools we lived, and how deceived and miserably we died.

A SIMILE OF LIFE.

"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—
Genesis iii. 19.

TH E is first a man, when he comes to a certain steady use of reason, according to his proportion : and when that is, all the world of men cannot tell precisely. Some are called at age at fourteen ; some at one-and-twenty ; some never ; but all men late enough ; for the life of a man comes upon him slowly and insensibly. But as, when the sun approaches towards the gates of the morning, he first opens a little eye of heaven, and sends away the spirits of darkness, and gives light to a cock, and calls up the lark to matins, and by and by gilds the fringes of a cloud, and peeps over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns, like those which decked the brows of Moses when he was forced to wear a veil because himself had seen the face of God ; and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher, till he shows a fair face and a full light, and then he shines one whole day, under a cloud often, and sometimes weeping great and little showers, and sets quickly ; so is a man's reason and his life.

CHRISTIAN GIVING.

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."—
Acts xx. 35.

GIVE, looking for nothing again; that is, without consideration of future advantages: give to children, to old men, to the unthankful, and the dying, and to those you shall never see again; for else your alms or courtesy is not charity, but traffic and merchandise. And be sure you omit not to relieve the needs of your enemy and the injurious; for so, possibly, you may win him to yourself; but do you intend the winning him to God.

Trust not your alms to intermedial, uncertain, and under dispensers: by which rule is not only intended the securing your alms in the right channel, but the humility of your person, and that which the apostle calls "the labour of love." And if you converse in hospitals and alms-houses, and minister with your own hand what your heart hath first decreed, you will find your heart endeared and made familiar with the needs and with the persons of the poor, those excellent images of Christ.

CURE FOR ANGER.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."—Matt. v. 5.

HUMILITY is the most excellent natural cure for anger in the world; for he that, by daily considering his own infirmities and failings, makes the error of his neighbour or servant to be his own case, and remembers that he daily needs God's pardon and his brother's charity, will not be apt to rage at the levities, or misfortunes, or indiscretions of another, greater than which he considers that he is very frequently and more inexcusably guilty of.

Consider the example of the ever blessed Jesus, who suffered all the contradictions of sinners, and received all affronts and reproaches of malicious, rash, and foolish persons, and yet in all of them was as dispassionate and gentle as the morning sun in autumn; and in this also He propounded Himself imitable by us. For if innocence itself did suffer so great injuries and disgraces, it is no great matter for us quietly to receive all the calamities of fortune, and indiscretion of servants, and mistakes of friends, and unkindnesses of kindred, and rudenesses of enemies, since we have deserved these and worse, even hell itself.

COVETOUSNESS.

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness."—

Luke xii. 15.

COVETOUSNESS is an enemy to alms, though not to all the effects of mercifulness: but this is to be cured by proper motives to charity, and by the proper rules of justice, which being secured, the arts of getting money are not easily made criminal. To which also we may add:—

Covetousness makes a man miserable, because riches are not means to make a man happy; and unless felicity were to be bought with money, he is a vain person who admires heaps of gold and rich possessions. For what Hippomachus said to some persons, who commended a tall man as fit to be a champion in the Olympic games—"It is true," said he, "if the crown hang so high that the longest arm could reach it"—the same we may say concerning riches; they were excellent things, if the richest man were certainly the wisest and the best. But as they are, they are nothing to be wondered at, because they contribute nothing towards felicity; which appears, because some men choose to be miserable that they may be rich, rather than be happy with the expense of money and doing noble things.

SIN OF ENVY.

"For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."—James iii. 16.

AGAINST envy I shall use the same argument I would use to persuade a man from the fever or the dropsy. 1. Because it is a disease; it is so far from having pleasure in it or a temptation to it, that it is full of pain, a great instrument of vexation: it eats the flesh and dries up the marrow, and makes hollow eyes and lean cheeks and a pale face. 2. It is nothing but a direct resolution never to enter into heaven by the way of noble pleasure taken in the good of others. 3. It is most contrary to God. 4. And a just contrary state to the felicities and actions of heaven, where every star increases the light of the other, and the multitudes of guests at the supper of the Lamb make the eternal meal more festival. 5. It is perfectly the state of hell and the passion of devils; for they do nothing but despair in themselves, and envy others' quiet or safety, and yet cannot rejoice either in their good or in their evil, although they endeavour to hinder that and procure this with all the devices and arts of malice and of a great understanding. 6. Envy can serve no end in the world: it cannot please any thing, nor do any thing, nor hinder any thing, but the content and felicity of him that hath it.

EFFICACY OF CHARITY.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.—1 Cor. xiii. 1.

THERE is no one duty which our blessed Saviour did recommend to His disciples with so repeated an injunction as this of charity and alms. To which add the words spoken by our Lord, "It is better to give than to receive." And when we consider how great a blessing it is that we beg not from door to door, it is a ready instance of our thankfulness to God, for His sake to relieve them that do. This duty is that alone whereby the future day of judgment shall be transacted. For nothing but charity and alms is that whereby Christ shall declare the justice and mercy of the eternal sentence. Martyrdom itself is not there expressed, and no otherwise involved, but as it is the greatest charity. Christ made Himself the greatest and daily example of alms or charity. He went up and down doing good, preaching the gospel, and healing all diseases : and God the Father is imitable by us in nothing but in purity and mercy. Alms given to the poor redound to the emolument of the giver both temporal and eternal. They are instrumental to the remission of sins ; our forgiveness and mercy to others being made the very rule and proportion of our confidence and hope, and our prayer to be forgiven ourselves.

JAN. 8

GIVING TO THE POOR.

"Freely ye have received, freely give."—Matt. x. 8.

AMONG needs, we are to reckon not only what will support our life, but also what will maintain the decency of our estate and person, not only in present needs, but in all future necessities, and very probable contingencies, but no further; we are not obliged beyond this, unless we see very great, public, and calamitous necessities. But yet, if we do extend beyond our measures, and give more than we are able, we have the Philippians and many holy persons for our precedent; we have St. Paul for our encouragement; we have Christ for our counsellor; we have God for our rewarder; and a great treasure in heaven for our recompense and restitution. But I propound it to the consideration of all Christian people, that they be not nice and curious, fond and indulgent to themselves in taking accounts of their personal conveniences; and that they make their proportions moderate and easy, according to the order and manner of Christianity; and the consequent will be this, that the poor will more plentifully be relieved, themselves will be more able to do it, and the duty will be less chargeable, and the owners of estates charged with fewer accounts in the spending them.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—John iii. 16.

CHARITY is a grace that loves God for Himself, and our neighbours for God. The consideration of God's goodness and bounty, the experience of those profitable and excellent emanations from Him, may be, and most commonly are, the first motive of our love; but when we are once entered, and have tasted the goodness of God, we love the spring for its own excellency, passing from passion to reason, from thanking to adoring, from sense to spirit, from considering ourselves to an union with God: and this is the image and little representation of heaven; it is beatitude in picture, or rather the infancy and beginnings of glory.

We need no incentives by way of special enumeration to move us to the love of God; for we cannot love any thing for any reason, real or imaginary, but that excellence is infinitely more eminent in God. There can but two things create love—perfection and usefulness: to which answer on our part, 1. Admiration; and, 2. Desire; and both these are centred in love.

JAN. 10

GOD REIGNS IN US.

"God hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God."—2 Cor. iv. 6.

GOD reigns in the hearts of His servants : there is His kingdom. The power of grace hath subdued all His enemies : there is His power. They serve Him night and day, and give Him thanks and praise : that is His glory. This is the religion and worship of God in the temple. The temple itself is the heart of man ; Christ is the High Priest, who from thence sends up the incense of prayers, and joins them to His own intercession, and presents all together to His Father ; and the Holy Ghost, by His dwelling there, hath also consecrated it into a temple ; and God dwells in our hearts by faith, and Christ by His Spirit, and the Spirit by His purities ; so that we are also cabinets of the mysterious Trinity. And what is this short of heaven itself, but as infancy is short of manhood, and letters of words ? The same state of life it is, but not the same age. It is heaven in a looking-glass, dark, but yet true ; representing the beauties of the soul, and the graces of God, and the images of His eternal glory, by the reality of a special presence.

FRUIT OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

"Let brotherly love continue."—Heb. xiii. 1.

LOVE hath four daughters. Their names are,
 1. Mercy; 2. Beneficence, or well-doing;
 3. Liberality; and, 4. Alms; which, by a
 special privilege, hath obtained to be called after the
 mother's name, and is commonly called Charity.
 The first, or eldest, is seated in the affection: and it
 is that which all the other must attend; for mercy
 without alms is acceptable when the person is dis-
 abled to express outwardly what he heartily desires.
 But alms without mercy are like prayers without
 devotion, or religion without humility. 2. Beneficence,
 or well-doing, is a promptness and nobleness of mind,
 making us to do offices of courtesy and humanity to all
 sorts of persons in their need, or out of their need.
 3. Liberality is a disposition of mind opposite to
 covetousness; and consists in the despite and neglect
 of money upon just occasions, and relates to our
 friends, children, kindred, servants, and other rela-
 tives. 4. But alms is a relieving the poor and
 needy.—The first and the last only are duties of
 Christianity. The second and third are circumstances
 and adjuncts of these duties; for liberality increases
 the degree of alms, making our gift greater; and
 beneficence extends it to more persons and orders of
 men, spreading it wider.

JAN. 12

THOUGHTS OF DEATH.

“What man that liveth, and shall not see death?”—

Psa. lxxxix. 48.

LET a man frequently and seriously, by imagination, place himself upon his death-bed, and consider what great joys he shall have for the remembrance of every day well spent, and what then he would give that he had so spent all his days. He may guess at it by proportions; for it is certain he shall have a joyful and prosperous night who hath spent his day holily; and he resigns his soul with peace into the hands of God, who hath lived in the peace of God and the works of religion in his lifetime. This consideration is of a real event; it is of a thing that will certainly come to pass.

To this may be useful that we consider the easiness of Christ's yoke, the excellences and sweetnesses that are in religion, the peace of conscience, the joy of the Holy Ghost, the rejoicing in God, the simplicity and pleasure of virtue, the intricacy, trouble, and business of sin; the blessings and health, and reward of that; the curses, the sicknesses, and sad consequences of this; and that, if we are weary of the labours of religion, we must eternally sit still and do nothing; for whatsoever we do contrary to it is infinitely more full of labour, care, difficulty, and vexation.

CONTENT THE CURE FOR ALL WORLDLY TROUBLES.

“ Having food and raiment let us be therewith content.”—1 Tim. vi. 8.

VIRTUES and discourses are, like friends, necessary in all fortunes; but those are the best, which are friends in our sadnesses, and support us in our sorrows and sad accidents: and in this sense, no man that is virtuous can be friendless; nor hath any man reason to complain of the Divine providence, or accuse the public disorder of things, or his own infelicity, since God hath appointed one remedy for all the evils in the world, and that is a contented spirit: for this alone makes a man pass through fire, and not be scorched; through seas, and not be drowned; through hunger and nakedness, and want nothing. For since all the evil in the world consists in the disagreeing between the object and the appetite, as when a man hath what he desires not, or desires what he hath not, or desires amiss; he that composes his spirit to the present accident, hath variety of instances for his virtue, but none to trouble him, because his desires enlarge not beyond his present fortune: and a wise man is placed in the variety of chances, like the nave or centre of a wheel, in the midst of all the circumvolutions and changes of posture, without violence or change.

FREQUENT PRAYER.

"Pray without ceasing."—1 Thess. v. 17.

PRAY often, and you shall pray oftener; and when you are accustomed to a frequent devotion, it will so insensibly unite to your nature and affections, that it will become trouble to omit your usual or appointed prayers; and what you obtain at first by doing violence to your inclinations, at last will not be left without as great unwillingness as that by which at first it entered. This rule relies not only upon reason derived from the nature of habits, which turn into a second nature, and make their actions easy, frequent, and delightful: but it relies upon a reason depending upon the nature and constitution of grace, whose productions are of the same nature with the parent, and increases itself, naturally growing from grains to huge trees, from minutes to vast proportions, and from moments to eternity. But be sure not to omit your usual prayers without great reason, though without sin it may be done; because after you have omitted something, in a little while you will be past the scruple of that, and begin to be tempted to leave out more. Keep yourself up to your usual forms—you may enlarge when you will; but do not contract or lessen them without a very probable reason.

QUALITIES OF APPROPRIATE PRAYER.

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"—Matt. vii. 11.

WHATSOEVER we may lawfully desire of temporal things, we may lawfully ask of God in prayer, and we may expect them, as they are promised. Whatsoever is necessary to our life and being is promised to us: and therefore we may, with certainty, expect food and raiment; food to keep us alive, clothing to keep us from nakedness and shame: so long as our life is permitted to us, so long all things necessary to our life shall be ministered. We may be secure of maintenance, but not secure of our life; for that is promised, not this: only concerning food and raiment we are not to make accounts by the measure of our desires, but by the measure of our needs. Whatever is convenient for us, pleasant, and modestly delectable, we may pray for, so we do it, 1. With submission to God's will. 2. Without impatient desires. 3. That it be not a trifle and inconsiderable, but a matter so grave and concerning, as to be a fit matter to be treated on between God and our souls. 4. That we ask it for ends of justice, or charity, or religion.

JAN. 16

THE LORD'S DAY.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."—

Exod. xx. 8.



N the Christian sabbath necessity is to be served first; then charity; and then religion—for this is to give place to charity, in great instances, and the second to the first, in all; and in all cases God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

The Lord's day, being the remembrance of a great blessing, must be a day of joy, festivity, spiritual rejoicing, and thanksgiving: and therefore it is a proper work of the day to let your devotions spend themselves in singing or reading psalms; in recounting the great works of God; in remembering His mercies; in worshipping His excellences; in celebrating His attributes; in admiring His person; in sending portions of pleasant meat to them for whom nothing is provided; and in all the arts and instruments of advancing God's glory, and the reputation of religion: in which it were a great decency that the memorial of the resurrection should be inserted, that the particular religion of the day be not swallowed up in the general. And of this we may the more easily serve ourselves, by rising seasonably in the morning to private devotion, and by retiring at the leisures and spaces of the day not employed in public offices.

A SERMON IN STONES.

"All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."—
Eccl. iii. 20.

A MAN may read a sermon, the best and most passionate that ever man preached, if he shall but enter into the sepulchres of kings. In the same Escorial where the Spanish princes live in greatness and power, and decree war or peace, they have wisely placed a cemetery, where their ashes and their glory shall sleep till time shall be no more; and where our kings have been crowned their ancestors lie interred, and they must walk over their grandsire's head to take his crown. There is an acre sown with royal seed, the copy of the greatest change, from rich to naked, from ceiled roofs to arched coffins, from living like gods to die like men. There is enough to cool the flames of lust, to abate the heights of pride, to appease the itch of covetous desires, to sully and dash out the dissembling colours of a lustful, artificial, and imaginary beauty. There the warlike and the peaceful, the fortunate and the miserable, the beloved and the despised princes mingle their dust, and pay down their symbol of mortality, and tell all the world that, when we die, our ashes shall be equal to kings', and our accounts easier, and our pains or our crowns shall be less.

DEVOTIONS A DUTY.

"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God."—1 Thess. v. 18.

DO not seek for deliciousness and sensible consolations in the actions of religion, but only regard the duty and the conscience of it; for although, in the beginning of religion most frequently, and at some other times irregularly, God complies with our infirmity, and encourages our duty with little overflowings of spiritual joy, and sensible pleasure, and delicacies in prayer, so as we seem to feel some little beam of heaven and great refreshments from the spirit of consolation, yet this is not always safe for us to have, neither safe for us to expect and look for; and when we do, it is apt to make us cool in our inquiries and waitings upon Christ when we want them: it is a running after Him, not for the miracles but for the loaves; not for the wonderful things of God, and the desires of pleasing Him, but for the pleasures of pleasing ourselves. And as we must not judge our devotion to be barren or unfruitful when we want the overflowings of joy running over, so neither must we cease for want of them. If our spirits can serve God choosingly and greedily out of pure conscience of our duty, it is better in itself and more safe to us.

BLESSING OF COMMUNICATING.

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."—2 Cor. xiii. 14.

THE strong must come lest they become weak; and the weak that they may become strong. The sick must come to be cured; the healthful to be preserved. They that have leisure must come, because they have no excuse; they that have no leisure must come hither, that by so excellent religion they may sanctify their business. The penitent sinners must come that they may be justified; and they that are justified, that they may be justified still. They that have fears and great reverence to these mysteries, and think no preparation to be sufficient, must receive, that they may learn how to receive the more worthily; and they that have a less degree of reverence must come often to have it heightened: and as those creatures that live amongst the snows of the mountains turn white with their food and conversation with such perpetual whitenesses, so our souls may be transformed into the similitude and union with Christ by our perpetual feeding on Him, and conversation, not only in His courts, but in His very heart, and most secret affections, and incomparable purities.

JAN. 20

THE LITTLENES OF HUMAN GREATNESS.

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."—Psa. xc. 12.

NO my apprehension, it is a sad record which is left by Athenæus concerning Ninus, the great Assyrian monarch, whose life and death are summed up in these words: "Ninus, the Assyrian, had an ocean of gold, and other riches, more than the sand in the Caspian Sea; he never saw the stars, and perhaps he never desired it; he never stirred up the holy fire among the Magi, nor touched his god with the sacred rod according to the laws; he never offered sacrifice, nor worshipped the deity, nor administered justice, nor spake to his people, nor numbered them; but he was most valiant to eat and drink, and having mingled his wines, he threw the rest upon the stones. This man is dead; behold his sepulchre; and now hear where Ninus is. Sometime I was Ninus, and drew the breath of a living man; but now am nothing but clay. I have nothing but what I did eat, and what I served to myself in lust; that was and is all my portion. The wealth with which I was esteemed blessed, my enemies, meeting together, shall bear away. I am gone to hell; and when I went thither I neither carried gold, nor horse, nor silver chariot. I that wore a mitre am now a little heap of dust."

PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION.

"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."—1 Cor. xi. 28.

WHEN the day of the feast is come, lay aside all cares and impertinences of the world, and remember that this is thy soul's day, a day of traffic and intercourse with heaven. Arise early in the morning. 1. Give God thanks for the approach of so great a blessing. 2. Confess thine own unworthiness to admit so Divine a guest. 3. Then remember and deplore thy sins, which have made thee so unworthy. 4. Then confess God's goodness, and take sanctuary there, and upon Him place thy hopes; 5. And invite Him to thee with renewed acts of love, of holy desire, of hatred of His enemy, sin. 6. Make oblation of thyself wholly to be disposed by Him, to the obedience of Him, to His providence and possession, and pray Him to enter and dwell there for ever. And after this, with joy and holy fear, and the frowardness of love, address thyself to the receiving of Him, to whom, and by whom, and for whom, all faith, and all hope, and all love, in the whole catholic church, both in heaven and earth, is designed; Him, whom kings and queens, and whole kingdoms, are in love with, and count it the greatest honour in the world that their crowns and sceptres are laid at His holy feet.


VAIN RESOLVES.

"These have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away."—Luke viii. 13.

HE that resolves to live well when a danger is upon him, or a violent fear, or when the appetites of lust are newly satisfied, or newly served, and yet when the temptation comes again, sins again, and then is sorrowful, and resolves once more against it, and yet falls when the temptation returns, is a vain man, but no true penitent, nor in the state of grace; and if he chance to die in one of these good moods, is very far from salvation; for if it be necessary that we resolve to live well, it is necessary we should do so. For resolution is an imperfect act, a term of relation, and signifies nothing but in order to the actions; it is as a faculty is to the act, as spring is to the harvest, as eggs are to birds, as a relative to its correspondent, nothing without it. No man therefore can be in the state of grace and actual favour by resolutions and holy purposes; these are but the gate and portal towards pardon: a holy life is the only perfection of repentance, and the firm ground upon which we can cast the anchor of hope in the mercies of God, through Jesus Christ.

VARIETY IN OUR DEVOTION.

"In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."—Philip. iv. 6.

RDER your private devotions so that they become not arguments and causes of tediousness by their indiscreet length, but reduce your words into a narrow compass, still keeping all the matter; and what is cut off in the length of your prayers supply in the earnestness of your spirit; for so nothing is lost, while the words are changed into matter, and length of time into fervency of devotion. The forms are made not the less perfect, and the spirit is more, and the scruple is removed.

It is not imprudent, if we provide variety of forms of prayer to the same purposes, that the change, by consulting with the appetites of fancy, may better entertain the spirit; and, possibly, we may be pleased to recite a hymn when a collect seems flat to us and unpleasant; and we are willing to sing rather than to say, or to sing this rather than that: we are certain that variety is delightful; and whether that be natural to us, or an imperfection, yet if it be complied with, it may remove some part of the temptation.

REPENTANCE.

"Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."—Luke xv. 7.

REPENTANCE, of all things in the world, makes the greatest change: it changes things in heaven and earth; for it changes the whole man from sin to grace, from vicious habits to holy customs, from unchaste bodies to angelical souls, from swine to philosophers, from drunkenness to sober counsels: and God Himself, "with whom is no variableness or shadow of change," is pleased, by descending to our weak understandings, to say that He changes also upon man's repentance, that He alters His decrees, revokes His sentence, cancels the bills of accusation, throws the records of shame and sorrow from the court of heaven, and lifts up the sinner from the grave to life, from his prison to a throne, from hell and the guilt of eternal torture to heaven, and to a title to never-ceasing felicities. If we be bound on earth, we shall be bound in heaven; if we be absolved here, we shall be loosed there; if we repent, God will repent, and not send the evil upon us which we had deserved.

WANDERING IN PRAYER.

"For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded."—Isa. l. 7.

IF we feel our spirits apt to wander in our prayers, and to retire into the world, or to things unprofitable, or vain and impertinent, use prayer to be assisted in prayer. Pray for the spirit of supplication, for a sober, fixed, and recollected spirit; and when to this you add a moral industry to be steady in your thoughts, whatsoever wanderings after this do return irremediably are a misery of nature and an imperfection, but no sin, while it is not cherished and indulged to.

In private it is not amiss to attempt the cure by reducing your prayers into collects and short forms of prayers, making voluntary interruptions, and beginning again, that the want of spirit and breath may be supplied by the short stages and periods.

When you have observed any considerable wanderings of your thoughts, bind yourself to repeat that prayer again with actual attention, or else revolve the full sense of it in your spirit, and repeat it in all the effect and desires of it: and, possibly, the tempter may be driven away with his own art.

JAN. 26

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE.

"Christ died for our sins."—I Cor. xv. 3.

BLESSED be Thy name, O holy Jesus, and blessed be that incomparable sweetness and holy sorrow which Thou sufferedst, when Thy holy hands and feet were nailed upon the cross, and the cross, being set in a hollowness of the earth, did in the fall rend the wounds wider, and there naked and bleeding, sick and faint, wounded and despised, didst hang upon the weight of Thy wounds three long hours, praying for Thy persecutors, satisfying Thy Father's wrath, reconciling the penitent thief, providing for Thy holy and afflicted mother, tasting vinegar and gall; and when the fulness of Thy suffering was accomplished, didst give Thy soul into the hands of God, and didst descend to the regions of longing souls, who waited for the revelation of this Thy day in their prisons of hope: and then Thy body was transfigured with a spear, and issued forth two sacraments, water and blood, and Thy body was composed to burial, and dwelt in darkness three days and three nights.

"Lord, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the Son of man that Thou thus visitest Him?"

TRUE NATURAL RELIGION.

"O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people."—Psa. cxvii. 1.

TRUE natural religion, that which was common to all nations and ages, did principally rely upon four great propositions: 1. That there is one God; 2. That God is nothing of those things which we see; 3. That God takes care of all things below, and governs all the world; 4. That He is the great Creator of all things, without Himself: and according to these were framed the four first precepts of the decalogue. In the first, the unity of the Godhead is expressly affirmed; in the second, His invisibility and immateriality; in the third, is affirmed God's government and providence, by avenging them that swear falsely by His name; by which also His omniscience is declared: in the fourth commandment, He proclaims Himself the Maker of heaven and earth; for, in memory of God's rest from the work of six days, the seventh was hallowed into a sabbath; and the keeping it was confessing God to be the great Maker of heaven and earth; and consequently to this, it also was a confession of His goodness, His omnipotence, and His wisdom: all which were written with a sunbeam in the great book of the creation.

READING THE BIBLE.

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me."

—John v. 39.

SET apart some portion of thy time, according to the opportunities of thy calling and necessary employment, for the reading of Holy Scripture; and, if it be possible, every day read or hear some of it read: you are sure that book teaches all truth, commands all holiness, and promises all happiness.

When it is in your power to choose, accustom yourself to such portions which are most plain and certain duty, and which contain the story of the life and death of our blessed Saviour. Read the Gospels, the Psalms of David, and especially those portions of Scripture which, by the wisdom of the church, are appointed to be publicly read upon Sundays and holidays, viz., the Epistles and Gospels. In the choice of any other portions, you may advise with a spiritual guide, that you may spend your time with most profit.

Beg of God, by prayer, that He would give you the spirit of obedience and profit, and that He would, by His Spirit, write the word in your heart, and that you describe it in your life. To which purpose serve yourself of some affectionate ejaculations to that purpose before and after this duty.

TRUE ZEAL.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—Matt. v. 16.

THE sum is this: that zeal is not a direct duty, is nowhere commanded for itself, and is nothing but a frowardness and circumstance of another duty, and therefore is then only acceptable when it advances the love of God and our neighbours, whose circumstance it is. That zeal is only safe, only acceptable, which increases charity directly; and because love to our neighbour and obedience to God are the two great portions of charity, we must never account our zeal to be good but as it advances both these, if it be in a matter that relates to both; or severally, if it relates severally. St. Paul's zeal was expressed in preaching without any offerings or stipend, in travelling, in spending and being spent for his flock, in suffering, in being willing to be accursed for love of the people of God and his countrymen. Let our zeal be as great as his was, so it be in affections to others, but not at all in angers against them: in the first there is no danger; in the second there is no safety. In brief, let your zeal (if it must be expressed in anger) be always more severe against thyself than against others.

DEGREES OF LOVE TO GOD.

*"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,
and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."*—
Matt. xxii. 37.

THE least love that is must be obedient, pure, simple, and communicative; that is, it must exclude all affection to sin, and all inordinate affection to the world, and must be expressive, according to our power, in the instances of duty, and must love for love's sake; and of this love martyrdom is the highest instance—that is, a readiness of mind rather to suffer any evil than to do any. Of this our blessed Saviour affirmed that no man had greater love than this; that is, this is the highest point of duty, the greatest love that God requires of man. And yet he that is the most imperfect must have this love, also, in preparation of mind, and must differ from another in nothing, except in the degrees of promptness and alacrity. And, in this sense, he that loves God truly, though but with a beginning and tender love, yet he loves God with all his heart, that is, with that degree of love which is the highest point of our duty and of God's charge upon us; and he that loves God with all his heart may yet increase with the increase of God; just as there are degrees of love to God among the saints, and yet each of them loves Him with all their powers and capacities.

GOD'S MANIFOLD LOVE.

“*God is love.*”—1 John iv. 8.

CONSIDER the immensity and vastness of the Divine love to us, expressed in all the emanations of His providence: 1. In His creation; 2. In His conservation of us. For it is not my prince, or my patron, or my friend, that supports me, or relieves my needs; but God, who made the corn that my friend sends me; who created the grapes, and supported him who hath as many dependencies, and as many natural necessities, and as perfect disabilities, as myself. God, indeed, made him the instrument of His providence to me, as he hath made his own land or his own cattle to him—with this only difference, that God, by his ministration to me, intends to do him a favour and a reward, which to natural instruments He does not. 3. In giving His Son; 4. In forgiving our sins; 5. In adopting us to glory; and ten thousand times ten thousand little accidents and instances happening in the doing every of these:—and it is not possible but for so great love we should give love again; for God, we should give man; for felicity, we should part with our misery. Nay, so great is the love of the holy Jesus, God incarnate, that He would leave all His triumphant glories, and die once more for man, if it were necessary for procuring felicity to him.

CONVERSE WITH GOD.


*"Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray,
and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice."—
Psa. lv. 17.*

DO not only choose the things of God, but secure your inclinations and aptnesses for God and for religion. For it will be a hard thing for a man to do such a personal violence to his first desires as to choose whatsoever he hath no mind to. A man will many times satisfy the importunity and daily solicitations of his first longings; and, therefore, there is nothing can secure our loves to God, but stopping the natural fountains, and making religion to grow near the first desires of the soul.

Converse with God by frequent prayer. In particular, desire that your desires may be right, and love to have your affections regular and holy. To which purpose make very frequent addresses to God by ejaculations and communions, and an assiduous daily devotion; discover to Him all your wants; complain to Him of all your affronts; do as Hezekiah did, lay your misfortunes and your ill news before Him, spread them before the Lord; call to Him for health, run to Him for counsel, beg of Him for pardon; and it is as natural to love Him to whom we make such addresses, and of whom we have such dependencies, as it is for children to love their parents.

SOBER RELIGION.

"A good man . . . will guide his affairs with discretion."—Psa. cxii. 5.

UR love to God must be sweet, even, and full of tranquillity; having in it no violences or transportations, but going on in a course of holy actions and duties, which are proportionable to our condition and present state; not to satisfy all the desire, but all the probabilities and measures of our strength. A new beginner in religion hath passionate and violent desires; but they must not be the measure of his actions: but he must consider his strength, his late sickness and state of death, the proper temptations of his condition, and stand at first upon his defence; not go to storm a strong fort, or attack a potent enemy, or do heroical actions, fitter for giants in religion. Indiscreet violences and untimely frowardness are the rocks of religion, against which tender spirits often suffer shipwreck.

Let our love be prudent and without illusion; that is, that it express itself in such instances which God hath chosen, or which we choose ourselves by proportion to His rules and measures. Love turns into doting when religion turns into superstition. No degree of love can be imprudent, but the expressions may: we cannot love God too much, but we may proclaim it in indecent manners.

FEB. 8

DESPAIR UNREASONABLE.


*"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger,
and plenteous in mercy."—Psa. ciii. 8.*

REMEMBER that despair belongs only to passionate fools or villains, such as were Achitophel and Judas, or else to devils and damned persons; and as the hope of salvation is a good disposition towards it, so is despair a certain consignation to eternal ruin. A man may be damned for despairing to be saved. Despair is the proper passion of damnation. "God hath placed truth and felicity in heaven, curiosity and repentance upon earth, but misery and despair are the portions of hell."

Gather together into your spirit and its treasure-house, the memory, not only all the promises of God, but also the remembrances of experience and the former senses of Divine favours, that from thence you may argue from times past to the present, and enlarge to the future and to greater blessings. For although the conjectures and expectations of hope are not like the conclusions of faith, yet they are a helmet against the scorplings of despair in temporal things, and an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, against the fluctuations of the spirit in matters of the soul.

EARNEST PRAYER.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."—Eph. vi. 18.

UR prayers must be fervent, intense, earnest, and importunate, when we pray for things of high concernment and necessity. "Continuing instant in prayer; striving in prayer; labouring fervently in prayer; night and day praying exceedingly; praying always with all prayer:" so St. Paul calls it. "Watching unto prayer:" so St. Peter. "Praying earnestly:" so St. James. And this is not at all to be abated in matters spiritual and of duty: for, according as our desires are, so are our prayers; and as our prayers are, so shall be the grace; and as that is, so shall be the measure of glory. But this admits of degrees according to the perfection or imperfection of our state of life; but it hath no other measures, but ought to be as great as it can; the bigger the better: we must make no positive restraints upon ourselves. In other things we are to use a bridle; and as we must limit our desires with submission to God's will, so also we must limit the importunity of our prayers by the moderation and term of our desires. Pray for it as earnestly as you may desire it.

GOD'S ATTRIBUTES.

"In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."—Psa. lvi. 4.

SO long as your hopes are regular and reasonable, though in temporal affairs, such as are deliverance from enemies, escaping a storm or shipwreck, recovery from a sickness, ability to pay your debts, &c., remember that there are some things ordinary, and some things extraordinary, to prevent despair. In ordinary, remember, 1. that the very hoping in God is an endearment of Him, and a means to obtain the blessing; "I will deliver him, because he hath put his trust in Me." 2. There are in God all those glorious attributes and excellences which in the nature of things can possibly create or confirm hope. God is, 1. strong; 2. wise; 3. true; 4. loving. There cannot be added another capacity to create a confidence; for upon these premises we cannot fail of receiving what is fit for us. 3. God hath obliged Himself by promise that we shall have the good of every thing we desire; for even losses and denials shall work for the good of them that fear God. And, if we will trust the truth of God for performance of the general, we may well trust His wisdom to choose for us the particular.

RULES OF FAITH.

"The trying of your faith worketh patience."—

James i. 3.

LET your hope be without vanity, or garishness of spirit; but sober, grave, and silent, fixed in the heart, not borne upon the lip, apt to support our spirits within, but not to provoke envy abroad.

Let your hope be of things possible, safe, and useful. He that hopes for an opportunity of acting his revenge, or lust, or rapine, watches to do himself a mischief. All evils of ourselves or brethren are objects of our fear, not hope; and, when it is truly understood, things useless and unsafe can no more be wished for than things impossible can be obtained.

Let your hope be patient, without tediousness of spirit, or hastiness of prefixing time. Make no limits or prescriptions to God; but let your prayers and endeavours go on still with a constant attendance on the periods of God's providence. The men of Bethulia resolved to wait upon God but five days longer; but deliverance stayed seven days, and yet came at last. And take not every accident for an argument of despair; but go on still in hoping; and begin again to work if any ill accident have interrupted you.

MODERATION.

"The desire of the righteous is only good."—
Prov. xi. 23.

LET your hope be moderate; proportioned to your state, person, and condition, whether it be for gifts or graces, or temporal favours. It is an ambitious hope for persons, whose diligence is like them that are least in the kingdom of heaven, to believe themselves endeared to God as the greatest saints; or that they shall have a throne equal to St. Paul or the blessed Virgin Mary. A stammerer cannot, with moderation, hope for the gift of tongues; or a peasant to become as learned as Origen; or if a beggar desires, or hopes, to become a king, or asks for a thousand pound a-year, we call him impudent. Hope that God will crown your endeavours with equal measures of that reward which He indeed freely gives, but yet gives according to our proportions. Hope for good success according to, or not much beyond, the efficacy of the causes and the instrument; and let the husbandman hope for a good harvest, not for a rich kingdom, or a victorious army.

HOPE'S USE.

"We are saved by hope."—Rom. viii. 24.

DO desire, to pray, and to long for the great object of our hope, the mighty prize of our high calling; and to desire the other things of this life as they are promised; that is, so far as they are made necessary and useful to us, in order to God's glory and the great end of souls. Hope and fasting are said to be the two wings of prayer. Fasting is but as the wing of a bird; but hope is like the wing of an angel, soaring up to heaven, and bears our prayers to the throne of grace. Without hope, it is impossible to pray; but hope makes our prayers reasonable, passionate, and religious; for it relies upon God's promise, or experience, or providence, and story. Prayer is always in proportion to our hope, zealous and affectionate.

Perseverance is the perfection of the duty of hope, and its last act; and so long as our hope continues, so long we go on in duty and diligence; but he that is to raise a castle in an hour, sits down and does nothing towards it.

FEB. 9

PATIENT FAITH.

"In your patience possess ye your souls."—

Luke xxi. 19.

HE that believes, does not make haste, but waits patiently till the times of refreshment come, and dares trust God for the morrow, and is no more solicitous for the next year than he is for that which is past; and it is certain that man wants faith who dares be more confident of being supplied when he hath money in his purse, than when he hath it only in bills of exchange from God; or that relies more upon his own industry than upon God's providence when his own industry fails him. If you dare trust to God when the case, to human reason, seems impossible, and trust to God then also out of choice, not because you have nothing else to trust to, but because He is the only support of a just confidence, then you give a good testimony of your faith.

True faith is confident, and will venture all the world upon the strength of its persuasions. Will you lay your life on it, your estate, your reputation, that the doctrine of Jesus Christ is true in every article? Then you have true faith. But he that fears men more than God, believes men more than he believes in God.

P O V E R T Y.


"Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?"—James ii. 5.

POVERTY is better than riches, and a mean fortune to be chosen before a great and splendid one. It is indeed despised, and makes men contemptible; it exposes a man to the insolence of evil persons, and leaves a man defenceless; it is always suspected; its stories are accounted lies, and all its counsels follies; it puts a man from all employment; it makes a man's discourses tedious, and his society troublesome. This is the worst of it; and yet all this, and far worse than this, the apostles suffered for being Christians; and Christianity itself may be esteemed an affliction as well as poverty, if this be all that can be said against it. However, certain it is that a great fortune is a great vanity, and riches is nothing but danger, trouble, and temptation; like a garment that is too long, and bears a train; not so useful to one, but it is troublesome to two—to him that bears the one part upon his shoulders, and to him that bears the other part in his hand. But poverty is the sister of a good mind, the parent of sober counsels, and the nurse of all virtues.

FEB. 11


PRAYER FOR PATIENCE.

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."—
Psa. xxxvii. 7.

 ALMIGHTY God, Father and Lord of all the creatures, who hath disposed all things and all chances so as may best glorify Thy wisdom, and serve the ends of Thy justice, and magnify Thy mercy by secret and undiscernible ways, bringing good out of evil; I most humbly beseech Thee to give me wisdom from above, that I may adore Thee and admire Thy ways and footsteps, which are in the great deep, and not to be searched out. Teach me to submit to Thy providence in all things, to be content in all changes of person and condition, to be temperate in prosperity, and to read my duty in the lines of Thy mercy; and in adversity to be meek, patient, and resigned; and to look through the cloud, that I may wait for the consolation of the Lord and the day of redemption; in the mean time doing my duty with an unwearied diligence, and an undisturbed resolution, having no fondness for the vanities or possessions of this world, but laying up my hopes in heaven and the rewards of holy living, and being strengthened with the spirit of the inner man, through Jesus Christ our Lord.


GOD PRESENT IN CHRISTIAN
ASSEMBLIES.

*"Where two or three are gathered together in My name,
there am I in the midst of them."*—Matt. xviii. 20.

OD is, by grace and benediction, specially present in holy places, and in the solemn assemblies of His servants. If holy people meet in grots and dens of the earth, when persecution or a public necessity disturbs the public order, circumstance, and convenience, God fails not to come thither to them: but God is also, by the same or a greater reason, present there, where they meet ordinarily, by order, and public authority. God will go out of His way to meet His saints, when themselves are forced out of their way of order by a sad necessity: but else, God's usual way is to be present in those places where His servants are appointed ordinarily to meet. But His presence there signifies nothing but a readiness to hear their prayers, to bless their persons, to accept their offices, and to like even the circumstance of orderly and public meeting. For thither the prayers of consecration, the public authority separating it, and God's love of order, and the reasonable customs of religion, have in ordinary, and in a certain degree, fixed this manner of His presence; and He loves to have it so.

RELIANCE UPON GOD.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight."—2 Cor. v. 7.

 T. JAMES'S sign is the best: "Show me thy faith by thy works." Faith makes the merchant diligent and venturous, and that makes him rich. Ferdinando of Arragon believed the story told him by Columbus, and therefore he furnished him with ships, and got the West Indies by faith in the undertaker. But Henry the Seventh of England believed him not; and therefore trusted him not with shipping, and lost all the purchase of that faith. It is told us by Christ, "He that forgives shall be forgiven:" if we believe this, it is certain we shall forgive our enemies: for none of us all but need and desire to be forgiven. No man can possibly despise, or refuse to desire, such excellent glories as are revealed to them that are servants of Christ; and yet we do nothing that is commanded us as a condition to obtain them. No man could work a day's labour without faith; but because he believes he shall have his wages at the day's or week's end, he does his duty. But he only believes who does that thing which other men, in like cases, do when they do believe. He that believes money gotten with danger is better than poverty with safety, will venture for it in unknown lands or seas; and so will he that believes it better to get to heaven with labour, than to go to hell with pleasure.

DEATH OF FRIENDS.

FEB. 14

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."—
John xi. 25.

THE more tender our spirits are made by religion, the more easy we are to let in grief; to cure which, we may consider that all the world must die, and therefore to be impatient at the death of a person concerning whom it was certain and known that he must die, is to mourn because thy friend or child was not born an angel; and when thou hast a while made thyself miserable by an importunate and useless grief, it may be thou shalt die thyself, and leave others to their choice whether they will mourn for thee or no; but by that time it will appear how impertinent that grief was which served no end of life, and ended in thy own funeral. But what great matter is it if sparks fly upward, or a stone falls into a pit; if that which was combustible be burned, or that which was liquid be melted, or that which is mortal do die? It is no more than a man does every day; for every night death hath gotten possession of that day, and we shall never live that day over again; and when the last day is come, there are no more days left for us to die. And what is sleeping and waking, but living and dying? what is spring and autumn, youth and old age, morning and evening, but real images of life and death, and really the same to many considerable effects and changes?

OUR OWN DEATH.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."—1 Cor. xv. 21.

AND how, if you were to die yourself? You know you must. Only be ready for it by the preparations of a good life; and then it is the greatest good that ever happened to you; else there is nothing that can comfort you. But if you have served God in a holy life, send away the women and the weepers; tell them it is as much intemperance to weep too much as to laugh too much; and when thou art alone, or with fitting company, die as thou shouldest, but do not die impatiently, or like a fox caught in a trap. For if you fear death, you shall never the more avoid it, but you make it miserable. Fannius, that killed himself for fear of death, died as certainly as Portia, that ate burning coals, or Cato, that cut his own throat. To die is necessary and natural, and it may be honourable; but to die poorly, and basely, and sinfully, that alone is it that can make a man unfortunate. No man can be a slave, but he that fears pain, or fears to die. To such a man nothing but chance and peaceable times can secure his duty, and he depends upon things without for his felicity; and so it is well but during the pleasure of his enemy, or a thief, or a tyrant, or it may be of a dog or a wild bull.

LONG AND SHORT PRAYERS.

"When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."—Matt. vi. 7.

A LONG prayer and a short differ not in their capacities of being accepted, for both of them take their value according to the fervency of spirit, and the charity of the prayer. That prayer which is short by reason of an impatient spirit, or dulness, or despite of holy things, or indifferency of desires, is very often criminal, always imperfect: and that prayer which is long out of ostentation, or superstition, or a trifling spirit, is as criminal and imperfect as the other in their several instances. This rule relates to private prayer. In public, our devotion is to be measured by the appointed office, and we are to support our spirits with spiritual arts, that our private spirit may be a part of the public spirit, and be adopted into the society and blessings of the communion of saints.

In all forms of prayer mingle petition with thanksgiving, that you may endear the present prayer and the future blessing, by returning praise and thanks for what we have already received. This is St. Paul's advice—"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

TRUST IN GOD.

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."—
Psa. xxiii. 4.

WHEN a prince fights justly, and yet unprosperously, if he could see all those reasons for which God hath so ordered it, he would think it the most reasonable thing in the world. If a man could have opened one of the pages of the Divine counsel, and could have seen the event of Joseph's being sold to the merchants of Amalek, he might, with much reason, have dried up the young man's tears: and when God's purposes are opened in the events of things, as it was in the case of Joseph, when he sustained his father's family and became lord of Egypt, then we see what ill judgment we made of things, and that we were passionate as children, and transported with sense and mistaken interest. The case of Themistocles was almost like that of Joseph; for, being banished into Egypt, he also grew in favour with the king, and told his wife, "he had been undone, unless he had been undone." For God esteems it one of His glories, that He brings good out of evil; and therefore it were but reason we should trust God to govern His own world as He pleases; and that we should patiently wait till the change cometh, or the reason be discovered.

VALUE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."—2 Tim. iii. 16.



HE Holy Ghost is certainly the best preacher in the world, and the words of Scripture the best sermons.


All the doctrine of salvation is plainly set down there, that the most unlearned person, by hearing it read, may understand all his duty. What can be plainer spoken than this, "Thou shalt not kill; Be not drunk with wine; Husbands, love your wives; Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them"? The wit of man cannot more plainly tell us our duty, or more fully, than the Holy Ghost hath done already.

Good sermons and good books are of excellent use; but yet they can serve no other end but that we practise the plain doctrines of Scripture.

What Abraham, in the parable, said concerning the brethren of the rich man, is here very proper; "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them; but if they refuse to hear these, neither will they believe though one should arise from the dead to preach unto them." All other preaching is the effect of skill and industry; and although of great benefit, yet it is but an ecclesiastical ordinance.

INORDINATE DESIRES.

*"Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?
for riches certainly makes themselves wings."*—
Prov. xxiii. 5.

 EMPRONIUS complained of want of clothes and was much troubled for a new suit, being ashamed to appear in the theatre with his gown a little threadbare: but when he got it, and gave his old clothes to Codrus, the poor man was ravished with joy, and went and gave God thanks for his new purchase; and Codrus was made richly fine and cheerfully warm by that which Sempronius was ashamed to wear: and yet their natural needs were both alike; the difference only was, that Sempronius had some artificial and fantastical necessities superinduced, which Codrus had not, and was harder to be relieved, and could not have joy at so cheap a rate, because Codrus only lived according to nature, the other by pride and ill customs, and measures taken by other men's eyes and tongues, and artificial needs. He that propounds to his fancy things greater than himself or his needs, and is discontent and troubled when he fails of such purchases, ought not to accuse providence, or blame his fortune, but his folly. God and nature make no more needs than they mean to satisfy; and he that will make more must look for satisfaction where he can.

TAKING NO HEED FOR THE MORROW.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."—

Matt. vi. 34.

ENJOY the blessings of this day, if God sends them, and the evils of it bear patiently and sweetly; for this day is only ours: we are dead to yesterday, and we are not yet born to the morrow. He, therefore, that enjoys the present, if it be good, enjoys as much as is possible; and if only that day's trouble leans upon him, it is singular and finite. "Sufficient to the day (said Christ) is the evil thereof:" sufficient, but not intolerable. But if we look abroad, and bring into one day's thoughts the evil of many, certain and uncertain, what will be, and what will never be, our load will be as intolerable as it is unreasonable. To reprove this instrument of discontent, the ancients feigned that in hell stood a man twisting a rope of hay; and still he twisted on, suffering an ass to eat up all that was finished: so miserable is he who thrusts his passions forwards towards future events, and suffers all that he may enjoy to be lost and devoured by folly and inconsideration, thinking nothing fit to be enjoyed but that which is not or cannot be had.

FEB. 21

THE SUNNY SIDE OF MISFORTUNE.

*"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain
we can carry nothing out."*—1 Tim. vi. 7.

IF I did fall into the hands of thieves, yet they did not steal my land. Or, I am fallen into the hands of publicans or sequestrators, and they have taken all from me: what now? let me look about me. They have left me the sun and moon, fire and water, a loving wife, and many friends to pity me, and some to relieve me, and I can still discourse; and, unless I list, they have not taken away my merry countenance, and my cheerful spirit, and a good conscience: they still have left me the providence of God, and all the promises of the gospel, and my religion, and my hopes of heaven, and my charity to them too; and still I sleep and digest, I eat and drink, I read and meditate; I can walk in my neighbour's pleasant fields, and see the varieties of natural beauties, and delight in all that in which God delights—that is, in virtue and wisdom, in the whole creation, and in God Himself. And he that has so many causes of joy, and so great, is very much in love with sorrow and peevishness, who loses all these pleasures, and chooses to sit down upon his little handful of thorns.

INSIGNIFICANCE OF WORLDLY AFFAIRS.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal."—Matt. vi. 19.

WID ever any man upon the rack afflict himself because he had received a cross answer from his mistress? or call for the particulars of a purchase upon the gallows? If thou dost really believe thou shalt be damned, I do not say it will cure the sadness of thy poverty, but it will swallow it up. But if thou believest thou shalt be saved, consider how great is that joy, how infinite is that change, how unspeakable is the glory, how excellent is the recompence, for all the sufferings in the world, if they were all laden upon the spirit! So that, let thy condition be what it will, if thou considerest thy own present condition, and comparest it to thy future possibility, thou canst not feel the present smart of a cross fortune to any great degree, either because thou hast a far bigger sorrow or a far bigger joy. Here thou art but a stranger travelling to thy country, where the glories of a kingdom are prepared for thee; it is therefore a huge folly to be much afflicted because thou hast a less convenient inn to lodge in by the way.

FEB. 28

A WAY OF MEETING TROUBLES.

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."—Psa. xxx. 5.

IT conduces much to our content, if we pass by those things which happen to our trouble, and consider that which is pleasing and prosperous, that, by the representation of the better, the worse may be blotted out; and, at the worst, you have enough to keep you alive, and to keep up and to improve your hopes of heaven. If I be overthrown in my suit at law, yet my house is left me still, and my land; or I have a virtuous wife, or hopeful children, or kind friends, or good hopes. If I have lost one child, it may be I have two or three still left me. Or else reckon the blessings which already you have received, and therefore be pleased, in the change and variety of affairs, to receive evil from the hand of God as well as good. Or else please thyself with hopes of the future; for we were not born with this sadness upon us, and it was a change that brought us into it, and a change may bring us out again. Harvest will come, and then every farmer is rich, at least for a month or two. It may be thou art entered into the cloud, which will bring a gentle shower to refresh thy sorrows.

SIGNS OF HUMILITY.

"Be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility."—1 Peter v. 5.

THE humble man trusts not to his own discretion, but in matters of concernment relies rather upon the judgment of his friends, counsellors, or spiritual guides. He does not pertinaciously pursue the choice of his own will, but in all things lets God choose for him, and his superiors, in those things which concern them. He does not murmur against commands. He is not inquisitive into the reasonableness of indifferent and innocent commands, but believes their command to be reason enough in such cases to exact his obedience. He lives according to a rule, and with compliance to public customs, without any affectation or singularity. He is meek and indifferent in all accidents and chances. He patiently bears injuries. He is always unsatisfied in his own conduct, resolutions, and counsels. He is a great lover of good men, and a praiser of wise men, and a censurer of no man. He is modest in his speech, and reserved in his laughter. He fears when he hears himself commended, lest God make another judgment concerning his actions than men do.

INTERCESSION

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men."—1 Tim. ii. 1.

IET prayers, and supplications, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour. We, who must love our neighbours as ourselves, must also pray for them as for ourselves, with this only difference, that we may enlarge in our temporal desires for kings, and pray for secular prosperity to them with more importunity than for ourselves: because they need more to enable their duty and government, and for the interests of religion and justice. This part of the prayer is by the apostle called *intercession*; in which, with special care, we are to remember our relatives, our family, our charge, our benefactors, our creditors, not forgetting to beg pardon and charity for our enemies, and protection against them.

Rely not on a single prayer in matters of great concernment; but make it as public as you can, by obtaining of others to pray for you—this being the great blessing of the communion of saints, that a prayer united is strong, like a well-ordered army; and God loves to be tied fast with such cords of love, and constrained by a holy violence.

UNCHARITABLE THOUGHTS.

"Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"—Matt. vii. 3.

REMEMBER that we usually disparage others upon slight grounds and little instances, and towards them one fly is enough to spoil a whole box of ointment; and if a man be highly commended, we think him sufficiently lessened if we clap one sin or folly or infirmity into his account. Let us, therefore, be just to ourselves, since we are so severe to others, and consider, whatsoever good any one can think or say of us, we can tell him of hundreds of base, and unworthy, and foolish actions, any one of which were enough (we hope) to destroy another's reputation; therefore, let so many be sufficient to destroy our over-high thoughts of ourselves.

When our neighbour is cried up by public fame and popular noises, that we may disparage and lessen him, we cry out that the people is a herd of unlearned and ignorant persons, ill judges, loud trumpets, but which never give certain sound: let us use the same art to humble ourselves, and never take delight and pleasure in public reports and acclamations of assemblies, and please ourselves with their judgment, of whom, in other the like cases, we affirm that they are mad.

FEB. 27

REJOICING IN INFIRMITY.

"The Lord hath chastened me sore: but He hath not given me over unto death."—Psa. cxviii. 18.

GIVE God thanks for every weakness, deformity, and imperfection, and accept it as a favour and grace of God, and an instrument to resist pride, and nurse humility; ever remembering, that when God, by giving thee a crooked back, hath also made thy spirit stoop or less vain, thou art more ready to enter the narrow gate of heaven, than by being straight, and standing upright, and thinking highly. Thus the apostles rejoiced in their infirmities, not moral, but natural and accidental, in their being beaten and whipped like slaves, in their nakedness and poverty.

Upbraid no man's weakness to discomfort him, neither report it to disparage him, neither delight to remember it to lessen him, or to set thyself above him. Be sure never to praise thyself, or to dispraise any man else, unless God's glory or some holy end do hallow it. And it was noted to the praise of Cyrus, that, amongst his equals in age, he would never play at any sport, or use any exercise, in which he knew himself more excellent than they; but in such in which he was unskilful he would make his challenges, lest he should shame them by his victory, and that himself might learn something of their skill, and do them civilities.

WILFULNESS OF MAN IN SIN.

"All we like sheep have gone astray."—Isa. liii. 6.

LET every man suppose what opinion he should have of one that should spend his time in playing with drum-sticks and cockle-shells, and that should wrangle all day long with a little boy for pins, or should study hard and labour to cozen a child of his gauds; and who would run into a river, deep and dangerous, with a great burden upon his back, even then when he were told of the danger, and earnestly importuned not to do it. And let him but change the instances and the person, and he shall find that he hath the same reason to think as bad of himself, who pursues trifles with earnestness, spending his time in vanity, and his "labour for that which profits not;" who, knowing the laws of God, the rewards of virtue, the cursed consequents of sin, that it is an evil spirit that tempts him to do it, a devil, one that hates him, that longs extremely to ruin him; that it is his own destruction that he is then working; that the pleasures of his sin are base and brutish, unsatisfying in the enjoyment, soon over, shameful in their story, bitter in their memory, painful in the effect here, and intolerable hereafter and for ever: yet in despite of all this, he runs foolishly into his sin and his ruin, merely because he is a fool, and winks hard, and rushes violently like a horse into the battle, or like a madman to his death.

MAR. 1

COMFORT IN TRIBULATION.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."—Matt. v. 4.

IN all troubles and sadder accidents, let us take sanctuary in religion, and by innocence cast out anchors for our souls, to keep them from shipwreck, though they be not kept from storm. For what philosophy can comfort a villain that is haled to the rack for murdering his prince, or that is broken upon the wheel for sacrilege? His cup is full of pure and unmingled sorrow: his body is rent with torment, his name with ignominy, his soul with shame and sorrow, which are to last eternally. But when a man suffers in a good cause, or is afflicted, and yet walks not perversely with his God, then "Anytus and Melitus may kill me, but they cannot hurt me;" then St. Paul's character is engraved in the forehead of our fortune: "We are troubled on every side, but not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" For, indeed, every thing in the world is indifferent but sin; and all the scorplings of the sun are very tolerable in respect of the burnings of a fever or a calenture.

SELF-CONDEMNATION.

"God be merciful to me a sinner."—Luke xviii. 13.


WE change our opinion of others by their kindness or unkindness towards us. If he be my patron and bounteous, he is wise, he is noble; his faults are but warts, his virtues are mountainous: but if he proves unkind, or rejects our importunate suit, then he is ill-natured, covetous, and his free meal is called gluttony; that which before we called civility is now very drunkenness, and all he speaks is flat, and dull, and ignorant as a swine. This, indeed, is unjust towards others; but a good instrument if we turn the edge upon ourselves. We use ourselves ill, abusing ourselves with false principles, cheating ourselves with lies and pretences, stealing the choice and election from our wills, placing voluntary ignorance in our understandings, denying the desires of the spirit, setting up a faction against every noble and just desire, the least of which, because we should resent up to reviling the injurious person, it is but reason we should, at least, not flatter ourselves with fond and too kind opinions.

Every day call to mind some one of thy foulest sins, or the most shameful of thy disgraces, or the indiscreetest of thy actions.

MAR. 8

ADVANTAGES OF HUMILITY OVER PRIDE.

"If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all."—Mark ix. 35.

FTEN meditate upon the effects of pride on one side, and humility on the other. First, That pride is like a canker, and destroys the beauty of the fairest flowers, the most excellent gifts and graces; but humility crowns them all. Secondly, That pride is a great hindrance to the perceiving the things of God, and humility is an excellent preparative and instrument of spiritual wisdom. Thirdly, That pride hinders the acceptation of our prayers, but "humility pierceth the clouds, and will not depart till the Most High shall regard." Fourthly, That humility is but a speaking truth, and all pride is a lie. Fifthly, That humility is the most certain way to real honour, and pride is ever affronted or despised. Sixthly, That pride turned Lucifer into a devil, and humility exalted the Son of God above every name, and placed Him eternally at the right hand of His Father. Seventhly, That "God resisteth the proud," but "giveth grace to the humble;" grace and pardon, remedy and relief against misery and oppression, content in all conditions, tranquillity of spirit, patience in afflictions, love abroad, peace at home, and utter freedom from contention.

C O N T E N T.

"The will of the Lord be done."—Acts xxi. 14.

WE are in the world like men playing at tables; the chance is not in our power, but to play it is; and when it is fallen we must manage it as we can: and let nothing trouble us, but when we do a base action, or speak like a fool, or think wickedly,—these things God hath put into our powers; but concerning those things which are wholly in the choice of another, they cannot fall under our deliberation, and therefore neither are they fit for our passions. My fear may make me miserable, but it cannot prevent what another hath in his power and purpose; and prosperities can only be enjoyed by them who fear not at all to lose them; since the amazement and passion concerning the future takes off all the pleasure of the present possession. Therefore, if thou hast lost thy land, do not also lose thy constancy; and if thou must die a little sooner, yet do not die impatiently. For no chance is evil to him that is content: and to a man nothing is miserable unless it be unreasonable. No man can make another man to be his slave unless he hath first enslaved himself to life and death, to pleasure or pain, to hope or fear: command these passions, and you are freer than the Parthian kings.

EXCESS OF ZEAL.

"Add to knowledge temperance."—2 Peter i. 6.

THAT zeal only is good which, in a fervent love, hath temperate expressions. For, let the affection boil as high as it can, yet if it boil over into irregular and strange actions, it will have but few, and will need many excuses. Elijah was zealous for the Lord of hosts; and yet he was so transported with it, that he could not receive answer from God till by music he was recomposed and tamed; and Moses broke both the tables of the law by being passionately zealous against them that brake the first.

Zeal must spend its greatest heat principally in those things that concern ourselves; but with great care and restraint in those that concern others.

Remember that zeal, being an excrescence of Divine love, must in no sense contradict any action of love. Love to God includes love to our neighbour; and therefore no pretence of zeal for God's glory must make us uncharitable to our brother; for that is just so pleasing to God as hatred is an act of love.

EMPLOYMENT OF LEISURE.

"In all labour there is profit."—Prov. xiv. 23.

THE resting days of Christians, and festivals of the church, must, in no sense, be days of idleness; for it is better to plough upon holy days, than to do nothing or to do viciously: but let them be spent in the works of the day, that is, of religion and charity, according to the rules appointed.

Avoid the company of drunkards and busy-bodies, and all such as are apt to talk much to little purpose; for no man can be provident of his time that is not prudent in the choice of his company; and if one of the speakers be vain, tedious, and trifling, he that hears, and he that answers, in the discourse, are equal losers of their time.

Never walk with any man, or undertake any trifling employment, merely to pass the time away; for every day well spent may become a "day of salvation," and time rightly employed is an "acceptable time." And remember, that the time thou triflest away was given thee to repent in, to pray for pardon of sins, to work out thy salvation, to do the work of grace, to lay up against the day of judgment a treasure of good works, that thy time may be crowned with eternity.

VAINGLORY TO BE AVOIDED.

"A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."—Prov. xxix. 23.

NEVER be ashamed of thy birth, or thy parents, or thy trade, or thy present employment, for the meanness or poverty of any of them; and when there is an occasion to speak of them, such an occasion as would invite you to speak of anything that pleases you, omit it not, but speak as readily and indifferently of thy meanness as of thy greatness. Primislaus, the first king of Bohemia, kept his country shoes always by him, to remember from whence he was raised: and Agathocles, by the furniture of his table, confessed that from a potter he was raised to be the king of Sicily.

Never speak of any thing directly tending to thy praise or glory; that is, with a purpose to be commended, and for no other end. If other ends be mingled with thy honour, as if the glory of God, or charity, or necessity, or any thing of prudence be thy end, you are not tied to omit your discourse or your design, that you may avoid praise; but pursue your end, though praise come along in the company. Only let not praise be the design.

FAITH AND HOPE.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for."—

Heb. xi. 1.

FAITH differs from hope in the extension of its object, and in the intention of degree. St. Austin thus accounts their differences. Faith is of all things revealed, good and bad, rewards and punishments, of things past, present, and to come, of things that concern us, of things that concern us not. But hope hath for its object things only that are good, and fit to be hoped for, future, and concerning ourselves. And because these things are offered to us upon conditions of which we may so fail as we may change our will, therefore our certainty is less than the adherences of faith; which (because faith relies only upon one proposition, that is, the truth of the word of God) cannot be made uncertain in themselves, though the object of our hope may become uncertain to us, and to our possession. For it is infallibly certain that there is heaven for all the godly, and for me amongst them all, if I do my duty. But that I shall enter into heaven is the object of my hope, not of my faith; and is so sure as it is certain I shall persevere in the ways of God.

STEADFAST LOVE.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength."—Mark xii. 30.

LOVE endeavours for ever to be present, to converse with, to enjoy, to be united with its object; loves to be talking of him, reciting his praises, telling his stories, repeating his words, imitating his gestures, transcribing his copy in every thing; and every degree of union and every degree of likeness is a degree of love; and it can endure any thing but the displeasure and the absence of its beloved. For we are not to use God and religion as men use perfumes, with which they are delighted when they have them, but can very well be without them. True charity is restless till it enjoys God in such instances in which it wants Him: it is like hunger and thirst, it must be fed, or it cannot be answered: and nothing can supply the presence, or make recompense for the absence of God, or of the effects of His favour and the light of His countenance.

He that loves God is not displeased at those accidents which God chooses; nor murmurs at those changes which He makes in his family; nor envies at those gifts He bestows: but chooses as He likes, and is ruled by His judgment, and is perfectly of His persuasion; loving to learn where God is the Teacher, and being content to be ignorant or silent where He is not pleased to open Himself.

ALMSGIVING.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."—Matt. vi. 1.

HE that gives alms must do it in mercy; that is, out of a true sense of the calamity of his brother, first feeling it in himself in some proportion, and then endeavouring to ease himself and the other of their common calamity.

He that gives alms must do it with a single eye and heart; that is, without designs to get the praise of men; and if he secures that, he may either give them publicly or privately: for Christ intended only to provide against pride and hypocrisy when He bade alms to be given in secret: it being otherwise one of His commandments, "that our light should shine before men:" this is more excellent; that is more safe.

To this also appertains that he who hath done a good turn should so forget it as not to speak of it; but he that boasts it, hath paid himself, and lost the nobleness of the charity.

Give alms with a cheerful heart and countenance; "not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver;" and therefore give quickly when the power is in thy hand, and the need is in thy neighbour, and thy neighbour at the door. He gives twice that relieves speedily.

P R I D E.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."—Prov. xvi. 18.

HE that is proud of his birth is proud of the blessings of others, not of himself: for if his parents were more eminent in any circumstances than their neighbours, he is to thank God, and to rejoice in them; but still he may be a fool, or unfortunate, or deformed; and when himself was born, it was indifferent to him whether his father were a king or a peasant, for he knew not any thing nor chose any thing: and most commonly it is true, that he who boasts of his ancestors, who were the founders and raisers of a noble family, doth confess that he hath in himself a less virtue and a less honour, and therefore that he is degenerated.

Whatsoever other difference there is between thee and thy neighbour, if it be bad it is thine own, but thou hast no reason to boast of thy misery and shame: if it be good, thou hast received it from God; and then thou art more obliged to pay duty and tribute, use and principal to Him: and it were a strange folly for a man to be proud of being more in debt than another.

CHRISTIAN EQUABILITY.

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all."—Psa. xxxiv. 19.

WHEN Zeno Citiensis lost all his goods in a storm, he retired to the studies of philosophy, to his short cloak and a severe life, and gave thanks to fortune for his prosperous mischance. When the north wind blows hard, and it rains sadly, none but fools sit down in it and cry; wise people defend themselves against it with a warm garment, or a good fire and a dry roof. When a storm of a sad mischance beats upon our spirits, turn it into some advantage by observing where it can serve another end, either of religion or prudence, of more safety or less envy: it will turn into something that is good, if we list to make it so; at least it may make us weary of the world's vanity, and take off our confidence from uncertain riches, and make our spirits to dwell in those regions where content dwells essentially. If it does any good to our souls, it hath made more than sufficient recompence for all the temporal affliction. And if we fail in the first design, if we bring it home to another equally to content us, or more to profit us, then we have put our conditions past the power of chance.

MAR. 18

CHRIST'S SUFFERING.

"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities."—Isa. liii. 5.

BLESSED be Thy name, O holy Jesus, and blessed be that patience and charity, by which for our sakes Thou wert content to be smitten with canes, and have that holy face, which angels with joy and wonder do behold, be spit upon and be despised, when compared with Barabbas, and scourged most rudely with unhallowed hands, till the pavement was purpled with that holy blood, and condemned to a sad and shameful, a public and painful death, and arrayed in scarlet, and crowned with thorns and stripped naked, and then clothed, and loaden with the cross, and tormented with a tablet stuck with nails at the fringes of Thy garment, and bound hard with cords, and dragged most vilely and most piteously till the load was too great, and didst sink Thy tender and virginal body to the earth; and yet didst comfort the weeping women, and didst more pity Thy persecutors than Thyself, and wert grieved for the miseries of Jerusalem to come forty years after, more than for Thy present passion.

PURE MOTIVES.

"Let your heart . . . be perfect with the Lord."—
1 Kings viii. 61.

IN every more solemn action of religion join together many good ends, that the consideration of them may entertain all your affections; and that, when any one ceases, the purity of your intention may be supported by another supply. He that fasts only to tame a rebellious body, when he is provided of a remedy either in grace or nature, may be tempted to leave off fasting. But he that in his fast intends the mortification of every unruly appetite, and accustoming himself to bear the yoke of the Lord, a contempt of the pleasures of meat and drink, humiliation of all wilder thoughts, obedience and humility, austerity and charity, and the convenience and assistance to devotion, and to do an act of repentance; whatever happens, will have reason enough to make him to continue his purpose, and to sanctify it. And certain it is, the more good ends are designed in an action, the more degrees of excellency the man obtains.

MAR. 15.

DESIRES TO BE GOVERNED BY NEEDS.

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."—Luke xii. 15.

IF you will secure a contented spirit, you must measure your desires by your fortune and condition, not your fortunes by your desires—that is, be governed by your needs, not by your fancy; by nature, not by evil customs and ambitious principles. He that would shoot an arrow out of a plough, or hunt a hare with an elephant, is not unfortunate for missing the mark or prey; but he is foolish for choosing such unapt instruments: and so is he that runs after his content with appetites not springing from natural needs, but from artificial, fantastical, and violent necessities. These are not to be satisfied; or if they were, a man hath chosen an evil instrument towards his content: nature did not intend rest to a man by filling of such desires. Is that beast better that hath two or three mountains to graze on, than a little bee that feeds on dew or manna, and lives upon what falls every morning from the store-houses of heaven, clouds and providence? Can a man quench his thirst better out of a river than a full urn, or drink better from the fountain which is finely paved with marble, than when it swells over the green turf?

CONSISTENCY IN HUMILITY.

"Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."—Luke xii. 1.

HUMILITY consists not in railing against thyself, or wearing mean clothes, or going softly and submissively; but in hearty and real evil or mean opinion of thyself. Believe thyself an unworthy person heartily, as thou believest thyself to be hungry, or poor, or sick, when thou art so.

Whatsoever evil thou sayest of thyself, be content that others should think to be true: and if thou callest thyself fool, be not angry if another says so of thee. For if thou thinkest so truly, all men in the world desire other men to be of their opinion; and he is a hypocrite that accuses himself before others, with an intent not to be believed. But he that calls himself intemperate, foolish, lustful, and is angry when his neighbour calls him so, is both a false and a proud person.

Love to be concealed, and little esteemed: be content to want praise, never being troubled when thou art slighted or undervalued; for thou canst not undervalue thyself, and if thou thinkest so meanly as there is reason, no contempt will seem unreasonable, and therefore it will be very tolerable.

MAR. 17

PREPAREDNESS FOR DEATH.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."—
Rom. vi. 23.

MEDITATE on the agonies of Christ in the garden, His sadness and affliction all that night; and thank and adore Him for His love, that made Him suffer so much for thee; and hate thy sins, which made it necessary for the Son of God to suffer so much. Meditate on the four last things. 1. The certainty of death. 2. The terrors of the day of judgment. 3. The joys of heaven. 4. The pains of hell; and the eternity of both. Think upon all thy friends who are gone before thee; and pray that God would grant to thee to meet them in a joyful resurrection. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God?"

A PRAYER FOR HUMILITY.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."—Psa. li. 10.

LET no riches make me ever forget myself, no poverty ever make me to forget Thee: let no hope or fear, no pleasure or pain, no accident without, no weakness within, hinder or discompose my duty, or turn me from the ways of Thy commandments. O, let Thy Spirit dwell with me for ever, and make my soul just and charitable, full of honesty, full of religion, resolute and constant in holy purposes, but inflexible to evil. Make me humble and obedient, peaceable and pious; let me never envy any man's good, nor deserve to be despised myself: and if I be, teach me to bear it with meekness and charity.

Give me a tender conscience; a conversation discreet and affable, modest and patient, liberal and obliging; a body chaste and healthful, competency of living according to my condition, contentedness in all estates, a resigned will and mortified affections; that I may be as Thou wouldst have me, and my portion may be in the lot of the righteous, in the brightness of Thy countenance, and the glories of eternity. Amen.

MAR. 19

MEN'S VANITY.

"Every man at his best state is altogether vanity."—

Psa. xxxix. 5.



OUR strength is inferior to that of many beasts, and our infirmities so many that we are forced to dress and tend horses and asses, that they may help our needs and relieve our wants.

Our beauty is in colour inferior to many flowers, and in proportion of parts it is no better than nothing; for even a dog hath parts as well proportioned and fitted to his purposes, and the designs of his nature, as we have; and when it is most florid and gay, three fits of ague can change it into yellowness and leanness, and the hollowness and wrinkles of deformity.

Our learning is then best when it teaches most humility; but to be proud of learning is the greatest ignorance in the world. For our learning is so long in getting, and so very imperfect, that the greatest clerk knows not the thousandth part of what he is ignorant; and knows so uncertainly what he seems to know, and knows no otherwise than a fool or a child even what is told him or what he guesses at, that except those things which concern his duty, and which God hath revealed to him, which also every woman knows so far as is necessary, the most learned man hath nothing to be proud of.

SORROW FOR SIN.

"Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation."—

2 Cor. vii. 10.

SOME people can shed tears for nothing, some for anything; but the proper and true effects of a godly sorrow are, fear of the Divine judgments, apprehension of God's displeasure, watchings and strivings against sin, patiently enduring the cross of sorrow (which God sends as their punishment), in accusation of ourselves, in perpetually begging pardon, in mean and base opinions of ourselves, and in all the natural productions from these, according to our temper and constitution. For if we be apt to weep in other accidents, it is ill if we weep not also in the sorrows of repentance; not that weeping is of itself a duty, but that the sorrow, if it be as great, will be expressed in as great a manner.

God ties us not to nice measures of sorrow, but only that we keep the general rules of proportion; that is, that a great sin have a great grief, a smaller crime being to be washed off with a lesser shower.

Our sorrow for sins is then best accounted of for its degree, when it, together with all the penal and afflictive duties of repentance, shall have equalled or exceeded the pleasure we had in commission of the sin.

MAR. 21

AN ACT OF REPENTANCE.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."—Acts iii. 19.

AS for me, I am not worthy to be called Thy servant; much less am I worthy to be Thy son; for I am the vilest of sinners and the worst of men; a lover of the things of the world, and a despiser of the things of God; proud and envious, lustful and intemperate, greedy of sin, and impatient of reproof, desirous to seem holy, and negligent of being so; transported with interest; fooled with presumption and false principles; disturbed with anger, with a peevish and unmortified spirit, and disordered by a whole body of sin and death. Lord, pardon all my sins for my sweetest Saviour's sake: Thou, who didst die for me, holy Jesus, save me and deliver me: reserve not my sins to be punished in the day of wrath and eternal vengeance; but wash away my sins and blot them out of Thy remembrance, and purify my soul with the waters of repentance and the blood of the cross; that, for what is past, Thy wrath may not come out against me; and, for the time to come, I may never provoke Thee to anger or to jealousy. O just and dear God, be pitiful and gracious to Thy servant. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR DILIGENCE.

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings."—Prov. xxii. 29.



ETERNAL God, who from all eternity dost behold and love Thy own glories and perfections infinite, and hast created me to do the work of God after the manner of men, and to serve Thee in this generation and according to my capacities; give me Thy grace that I may be a careful and prudent spender of my time, so as I may best prevent or resist all temptation, and be profitable to the Christian commonwealth, and, by discharging all my duty, may glorify Thy name. Take from me all slothfulness, and give me a diligent and an active spirit, and wisdom to choose my employment: that I may do works proportionable to my person and to the dignity of a Christian, and may fill up all the spaces of my time with actions of religion and charity; that, when the devil assaults me, he may not find me idle; and my dearest Lord at His sudden coming may find me busy in lawful, necessary, and pious actions; improving my talent intrusted to me by Thee, my Lord; that I may enter into the joy of my Lord, to partake of His eternal felicities, even for Thy mercy's sake, and for my dearest Saviour's sake. Amen.

MAR. 28

ALL OUR DEEDS ARE DONE IN GOD'S PRESENCE.

"He that formed the eye, shall He not see?"—

Psa. xciv. 9.

WHEN we see ourselves placed in the eye of God, who sets us on work and will reward us plenteously, to serve Him with an eye-service is very pleasing; for He also sees the heart: and the want of this consideration was declared to be the cause why Israel sinned so grievously, "for they say, the Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not:" therefore "the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness." What a child would do in the eye of his father, and a pupil before his tutor, and a wife in the presence of her husband, and a servant in the sight of his master, let us always do the same; for we are made a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men; we are always in the sight and presence of the all-seeing and almighty God, who also is to us a father and a guardian, a husband and a lord.

RECREATION.

"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."—

1 Cor. x. 31.

UNLESS much as may be, cut off all impertinent and useless employments of your life, unnecessary and fantastic visits, long waitings upon great personages, where neither duty, nor necessity, nor charity obliges us; all vain meetings, all laborious trifles, and whatsoever spends much time to no real, civil, religious, or charitable purpose.

Let not your recreations be lavish spenders of your time; but choose such which are healthful, short, transient, recreative, and apt to refresh you; but at no hand dwell upon them, or make them your great employment; for he that spends his time in sports, and calls it recreation, is like him whose garment is all made of fringes, and his meat nothing but sauces; they are healthless, chargeable, and useless. And therefore avoid such games which require much time or long attendance, or which are apt to steal thy affections from more severe employments.

MAR. 25

AN ACTION JUDGED BY ITS MOTIVE.

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the Lord pondereth the hearts."—Prov. xxi. 2.

THERE are some actions, which are usually reckoned as parts of our religion, which yet, of themselves, are so relative and imperfect, that without the purity of intention they degenerate: and unless they be directed and proceed on to those purposes which God designed them to, they return into the family of common, secular, or sinful actions. Thus, alms are for charity, fasting for temperance, prayer is for religion, humiliation is for humility, austerity or sufferance is in order to the virtue of patience: and when these actions fail of their several ends, or are not directed to their own purposes, alms are misspent, fasting is an impertinent trouble, prayer is but lip-labour, humiliation is but hypocrisy, sufferance is but vexation; for such were the alms of the Pharisee, the fast of Jezebel, the prayer of Judah reprov'd by the prophet Isaiah, the humiliation of Ahab, the martyrdom of heretics; in which nothing is given to God but the body, or the forms of religion; but the soul and the power of godliness is wholly wanting.

INDIFFERENCE TO WORLDLY OPINION.

"If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."—1 Peter ii. 20.

IT is likely our hearts are pure and our intentions spotless, when we are not solicitous of the opinion and censures of men; but only that we do our duty, and be accepted of God. For our eyes will certainly be fixed there from whence we expect our reward: and if we desire that God should approve us, it is a sign we do His work, and expect Him to be our paymaster.

He that does as well in private, between God and his own soul, as in public, in pulpits, in theatres, and market-places, hath given himself a good testimony that his purposes are full of honesty, nobleness, and integrity. For what Elkanah said to the mother of Samuel, "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" is most certainly verified concerning God; that He, who is to be our Judge, is better than ten thousand witnesses. But he that would have his virtue published, studies, not virtue, but glory. "He is not just that will not be just without praise: but he is a righteous man that does justice, when to do so is made infamous; and he is a wise man who is delighted with an ill name that is well gotten."

MAR. 27

SIGNS OF PURITY OF INTENTION.

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."—Matt. vi. 24.

IT is probable our hearts are right with God, and our intentions innocent and pious, if we set upon actions of religious or civil life with an affection proportionate to the quality of the work; that we act our temporal affairs with a desire no greater than our necessity; and that, in actions of religion, we be zealous, active, and operative, so far as prudence will permit; but, in all cases, that we value a religious design before a temporal, when otherwise they are in equal order to their several ends: that is, that whatsoever is necessary in order to our soul's health be higher esteemed than what is for bodily; and the necessities, the indispensable necessities of the spirit, be served before the needs of nature, when they are required in their several circumstances; or plainer yet, when we choose any temporal inconvenience rather than commit a sin, and when we choose to do a duty rather than to get gain. But he that does his recreation or his merchandise cheerfully, promptly, readily, and busily, and the work of religion slowly, flatly, and without appetite, and the spirit moves like Pharaoh's chariots when the wheels were off; it is a sign that his heart is not right with God, but it cleaves too much to the world.

SEEKING GOD'S ASSISTANCE.

"Help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee."—

2 Chron. xiv. 11.

LET every action of concernment be begun with prayer, that God would not only bless the action, but sanctify your purpose; and make an oblation of the action to God: holy and well-intended actions being the best oblations and presents we can make to God; and, when God is entitled to them, He will the rather keep the fire upon the altar bright and shining. In the prosecution of the action, renew and re-ignite your purpose by short ejaculations to these purposes: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name let all praise be given:" and consider, "Now I am working the work of God; I am His servant, I am in a happy employment, I am doing my Master's business, I am not at my own disposal, I am using His talents, and all the gain must be His." For then be sure, as the glory is His, the reward shall be thine. If thou bringest His goods home with increase, He will make thee ruler over cities. Have a care that, while the altar thus sends up a holy fume, thou dost not suffer the birds to come and carry away the sacrifice: that is, let not that which began well, and was intended for God's glory, decline and end in thy own praise, or temporal satisfaction, or a sin.

SINGLENESSE OF PURPOSE.

"If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."—Matt. vi. 22.


IF any temptation to spoil your purpose happens in a religious duty, do not presently omit the action, but rather strive to rectify your intention, and to mortify the temptation. St. Bernard taught us this rule: for when the devil, observing him to preach excellently and to do much benefit to his hearers, tempted him to vain-glory, hoping that the good man, to avoid that, would cease preaching, he gave this answer only, "I neither began for thee, neither for thee will I make an end."

In all actions which are of long continuance, deliberation, and abode, let your holy and pious intention be actual; that is, that it be, by a special prayer or action, by a peculiar act of resignation or oblation, given to God: but in smaller actions, and little things and indifferent, fail not to secure a pious habitual intention; that is, that it be included within your general care, that no action have an ill end; and that it be comprehended in your general prayers, whereby you offer yourself and all you do to God's glory.

CONTEMPLATION OF THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

"Come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."—

Isa. ii. 5.

FTEN consider and contemplate the joys of heaven, that, when they have filled thy desires, which are the sails of the soul, thou mayest steer only thither, and never more look back to Sodom. And when thy soul dwells above, and looks down upon the pleasures of the world, they seem like things at a distance, little and contemptible; and men running after the satisfaction of their sottish appetites seem foolish as fishes, thousands of them running after a rotten worm, that covers a deadly hook; or at the best, but like children with great noise pursuing a bubble rising from a walnut-shell, which ends sooner than the noise.

To this the example of Christ and His apostles, of Moses, and all the wise men of all ages of the world, will much help; who, understanding how to distinguish good from evil, did choose a sad and melancholy way to felicity, rather than the broad, pleasant, and easy path to folly and misery.

PURITY OF INTENTION.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."—Matt. v. 8.

THAT we should intend and design God's glory in every action we do, whether it be natural or chosen, is expressed by St. Paul, "Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." Which rule when we observe, every action of nature becomes religious, and every meal is an act of worship, and shall have its reward in its proportion, as well as an act of prayer. Blessed be that goodness and grace of God, which, out of infinite desire to glorify and save mankind, would make the very works of nature capable of becoming acts of virtue, that all our lifetime we may do Him service.

This grace is so excellent that it sanctifies the most common action of our life; and yet so necessary that, without it, the very best actions of our devotion are imperfect and vicious. For he that prays out of custom, or gives alms for praise, or fasts to be accounted religious, is but a Pharisee in his devotion, and a beggar in his alms, and a hypocrite in his fast. But a holy end sanctifies all these and all other actions which can be made holy, and gives distinction to them, and procures acceptance.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith."—
2 Cor. xiii. 5.

LET him that is most busied set apart some "solemn time every year," in which, for the time, quitting all worldly business, he may attend wholly to fasting and prayer, and the dressing of his soul by confessions, meditations, and attendances upon God; that he may make up his accounts, renew his vows, make amends for his carelessness, and retire back again from whence levity and the vanities of the world, or the opportunity of temptations, or the distraction of secular affairs, have carried him.

In this we shall be much assisted, and we shall find the work more easy, if, before we sleep, every night, we examine the actions of the past day with a particular scrutiny, if there have been any accident extraordinary; as long discourse, a feast, much business, variety of company. If nothing but common hath happened, the less examination will suffice; only let us take care that we sleep not without such a recollection of the actions of the day as may represent any thing that is remarkable and great either to be the matter of sorrow or thanksgiving. For other things a general care is proportionable.

APRIL 2

GOD IN ALL THINGS.

"Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?"—Psa. cxxxix. 7.

GOD is in every place: suppose it therefore to be a church; and that decency of deportment and piety of carriage which you are taught by religion, or by custom, or by civility and public manners, to use in churches, the same use in all places: with this difference only, that in churches let your deportment be religious in external forms and circumstances also; but there and every where let it be religious in abstaining from spiritual indecencies, and in readiness to do good actions; that it may not be said of us, as God once complained of His people, "Why hath My beloved done wickedness in My house?"

God is in every creature: be cruel towards none, neither abuse any by intemperance. Remember that the creatures, and every member of thy own body, are the lesser cabinets and receptacles of God. They are such which God hath blessed with His presence, hallowed by His touch, and separated from unholy use, by making them to belong to His dwelling. He walks as in the presence of God that converses with Him in frequent prayer and frequent communion; that runs to Him in all his necessities; that asks counsel of Him in all his doubtings; that opens all his wants to Him; that weeps before Him for his sins.

APRIL 8

THE WISDOM OF CONTENT.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain."—

1 Tim. vi. 6.

AS not all the world God's family? Are not we His creatures? Are we not as clay in the hand of the potter? Do we not live upon His meat, and move by His strength, and do our work by His light? Are we any thing but what we are from Him? And shall there be a mutiny among the flocks and herds, because their lord or their shepherd chooses their pastures, and suffers them not to wander into deserts and unknown ways? If we choose, we do it so foolishly that we cannot like it long, and most commonly not at all: but God, who can do what He pleases, is wise to choose safely for us, affectionate to comply with our needs, and powerful to execute all His wise decrees. Here, therefore, is the wisdom of the contented man, to let God choose for him; for when we have given up our wills to Him, and stand in that station of the battle where our great General hath placed us, our spirits must needs rest while our conditions have for their security the power, the wisdom, and the charity of God.

Contentedness in all accidents brings great peace of spirit, and is the great and only instrument of temporal felicity.

APRIL 4

NO INTENTION CAN SANCTIFY AN UNHOLY ACTION.

"When I looked for good, then evil came unto me."—
Job xxx. 26.

WE are to consider that no intention can sanctify an unholy or unlawful action. Saul, the king, disobeyed God's commandment, and spared the cattle of Amalek to reserve the best for sacrifice; and Saul, the Pharisee, persecuted the church of God, with a design to do God service; and they that killed the apostles had also good purposes, but they had unhallowed actions. When there is both truth in election, and charity in the intention; when we go to God in ways of His own choosing or approving, then our eye is single, and our hands are clean, and our hearts are pure. But when a man does evil that good may come of it, or good to an evil purpose, that man does like him that rolls himself in thorns that he may sleep easily; he roasts himself in the fire that he may quench his thirst with his own sweat; he turns his face to the east that he may go to bed with the sun. I end this with the saying of a wise heathen: "He is to be called evil that is good only for his own sake. Regard not how full hands you bring to God, but how pure. Many cease from sin out of fear alone, not out of innocence or love of virtue;" and they, as yet, are not to be called innocent, but timorous.

CHOICE OF EMPLOYMENT.

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—Matt. xvi. 26.

LET your employment be fitted to your person and calling. Some there are that employ their time in affairs infinitely below the dignity of their person; and, being called by God or by the republic to help to bear great burdens, and to judge a people, do enfeeble their understandings and disable their persons by sordid and brutish business. Thus Nero went up and down Greece, and challenged the fiddlers at their trade. Acropus, a Macedonian king, made lanterns. Harcatius, the king of Parthia, was a mole-catcher: and Biantes, the Lydian, filed needles. He that is appointed to minister in holy things must not suffer secular affairs and sordid arts to eat up great portions of his employment: a clergyman must not keep a tavern, nor a judge be an inn-keeper: and it was a great idleness in Theophylact, the patriarch, to spend his time in his stable of horses, when he should have been in his study, or the pulpit, or saying his holy offices. Such employments are the diseases of labour, and the rust of time, which it contracts, not by lying still, but by dirty employment.

SELF-ABASEMENT.

"When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."—Matt. vi. 3.

WHEN thou hast said or done any thing for which thou receivest praise or estimation, take it indifferently and return it to God; reflecting upon Him as the giver of the gift, or the blesser of the action, or the aid of the design: and give God thanks for making thee an instrument of His glory, for the benefit of others.

Secure a good name to thyself by living virtuously and humbly; but let this good name be nursed abroad, and never be brought home to look upon it: let others use it for their own advantage; let them speak of it if they please; but do not thou at all use it, but as an instrument to do God glory, and thy neighbour more advantage. Let thy face, like Moses', shine to others, but make no looking-glasses for thyself.

Take no content in praise when it is offered thee; but let thy rejoicing in God's gift be allayed with fear, lest this good bring thee to evil. Use the praise as you use your pleasure in eating and drinking; if it comes, make it do drudgery, let it serve other ends, and minister to necessities, and to caution.

COMPARISON WITH OTHERS.

"Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased."—

Luke xviii. 14.

NEVER compare thyself with others, unless it be to advance them and to depress thyself. To which purpose, we must be sure, in some sense or other, to think ourselves the worst in every company where we come: one is more learned than I am, another is more prudent, a third more honourable, a fourth more chaste, or he is more charitable, or less proud. For the humble man observes their good, and reflects only upon his own vileness; or considers the many evils of himself certainly known to himself, and the ill of others but by uncertain report; or he considers that the evils done by another are out of much infirmity or ignorance, but his own sins are against a clearer light, and if the other had so great helps, he would have done more good and less evil; or he remembers, that his old sins before his conversion were greater in the nature of the thing, or in certain circumstances, than the sins of other men. So St. Paul reckoned himself the chiefest of sinners, because formerly he had acted the chiefest sin of persecuting the church of God.

APRIL 8

RULES FOR EMPLOYING OUR TIME.

"The time is short."—I Cor. vii. 29.

IN the morning, when you awake, accustom yourself to think first upon God, or something in order to His service; and at night also, let Him close your eyes: and let your sleep be necessary and healthful, not idle and expensive of time, beyond the needs and conveniences of nature; and sometimes be curious to see the preparation which the sun makes, when he is coming forth from his chambers of the east.


Let every man that hath a calling be diligent in pursuance of its employment, so as not lightly or without reasonable occasion to neglect it in any of those times which are usually, and by the custom of prudent persons and good husbands, employed in it.

Let all the intervals or void space of time be employed in prayers, reading, meditating, works of nature, recreation, charity, friendliness and neighbourhood, and means of spiritual and corporal health; ever remembering so to work in our calling, as not to neglect the work of our high calling; but to begin and end the day with God, with such forms of devotion as shall be proper to our necessities.

APRIL 9

IN EVERY STATE OF LIFE WE CAN SERVE GOD.

"Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."—Col. iii. 23.

OD provides the good things of the world to serve the needs of nature, by the labours of the ploughman, the skill and pains of the artisan, and the dangers and traffic of the merchant: these men are, in their calling, the ministers of the Divine Providence, and the stewards of the creation, and servants of a great family of God, the world, in the employment of procuring necessities for food and clothing, ornament, and physic. In their proportions, also, a king, and a priest, and a prophet, a judge, and an advocate, doing the works of their employment according to their proper rules, are doing the work of God; because they serve those necessities which God hath made, and yet made no provision for them but by their ministry. So that no man can complain that his calling takes him off from religion; his calling itself, and his very worldly employment in honest trades and offices, is a serving of God; and, if it be moderately pursued, and according to the rules of Christian prudence, will leave void spaces enough for prayers and retirements of a more spiritual religion.

CARE OF OUR TIME.

"I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

—John ix. 4.

HE that is choice of his time will also be choice of his company, and choice of his actions; lest the first engage him in vanity and loss; and the latter, by being criminal, be a throwing his time and himself away, and going back in the accounts of eternity.

God hath given to man a short time here upon earth, and yet upon this short time eternity depends; but so, that for every hour of our life (after we are persons capable of laws, and know good from evil) we must give account to the great Judge of men and angels. And this it is which our blessed Saviour told us, that we must account for every idle word; not meaning, that every word which is not designed to edification, or is less prudent, shall be reckoned for a sin; but that the time which we spend in our idle talking and unprofitable discoursings, that time which might and ought to have been employed to spiritual and useful purposes, that is to be accounted for.

F A I T H.

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove."—Matt. xvii. 20.

IT is a true sign of faith to be a stranger upon earth in our affections, and to have all our thoughts and principal desires fixed upon the matters of faith, the things of heaven. For, if a man were adopted heir to Cæsar, he would (if he believed it real and effective) despise the present, and wholly be at court in his father's eye; and his desires would outrun his swiftest speed, and all his thoughts would spend themselves in creating ideas and little fantastic images of his future condition. Now, God hath made us heirs of His kingdom, and co-heirs with Jesus: if we believed this, we would think, and affect, and study accordingly. But he that rejoices in gain, and his heart dwells in the world, and is espoused to a fair estate, and is transported with a light momentary joy, and is afflicted with losses, and amazed with temporal persecutions, and esteems disgrace or poverty in a good cause to be intolerable—this man either hath no inheritance in heaven, or believes none; and believes not that he is adopted to be the son of God, the heir of eternal glory.

REMISSION OF SINS.

"Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."—Acts x. 43.

THE sun, passing to its southern tropic, looks with an open eye upon his sunburnt Ethiopians, but at the same time sends light from its posterns, and collateral influences from the back side of his beams, and sees the corners of the east when his face tends towards the west, because he is a round body of fire, and hath some little images and resemblances of the Infinite. So is God's mercy: when it looked upon Moses, it relieved St. Paul, and it pardoned David, and gave hope to Manasses, and might have restored Judas if he would have had hope, and used himself accordingly. But as to my own case, I have sinned grievously and frequently; but I have repented it; but I have begged pardon; I have confessed it and forsaken it. I cannot undo what was done, and I perish if God hath appointed no remedy, if there be no remission; but then my religion falls together with my hope, and God's word fails as well as I. But I believe the article of forgiveness of sins; and if there be any such thing I may do well, for I have, and do, and will do that which all good men call repentance, that is, I will be humbled before God.

PURE REPENTANCE.

"Behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you."—
2 Cor. vii. 11.

DESIRE that it be observed that sorrow for sins is not repentance; not that duty which gives glory to God, so as to obtain of Him that He will glorify us. Repentance is a great volume of duty; and godly sorrow is but the frontispiece or title-page; it is the harbinger or first introduction to it: or, if you will consider it in the words of St. Paul, "Godly sorrow worketh repentance:" sorrow is the parent, and repentance is the product. And, therefore, it is a high piece of ignorance to suppose that a crying out and roaring for our sins upon our death-bed can reconcile us to God: our crying to God must be so early and so lasting as to be able to teem and produce such a daughter, which must live long, and grow from an embryo to an infant, from infancy to childhood, from thence to the fulness of the stature of Christ; and then it is a holy and a happy sorrow. But if it be a sorrow only of a death-bed, it is a fruitless shower; or like the rain of Sodom, not the beginning of repentance, but the kindling of a flame, the commencement of an eternal sorrow.

APRIL 14

THE BETTER LAND.

"For our conversation is in heaven."—Phil. iii. 20.

ENDEAVOUR to be in love with the felicities of saints and angels, and be once persuaded to believe that there is a condition of living better than this; that there are creatures more noble than we; that above there is a country better than ours; that the inhabitants know more and know better, and are in places of rest and desire; and first learn to value it, and then learn to purchase it, and death cannot be a formidable thing, which lets us into so much joy and so much felicity. And, indeed, who would not think his condition mended if he passed from conversing with dull mortals, with ignorant and foolish persons, with tyrants and enemies of learning, to converse with Homer and Plato, with Socrates and Cicero, with Plutarch and Fabricius? So the heathens speculated, but we consider higher. "The dead that die in the Lord" shall converse with St. Paul, and all the college of the apostles, and all the saints and martyrs, with all the good men whose memory we preserve in honour, with excellent kings and holy bishops, and with the great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, Jesus Christ, and with God Himself.

NOBLE LIVING.

"Order my steps in Thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me."—Psa. cxix. 133.

IF we so order our affairs and spirits that we do not fear death, we can then receive counsel, and consider, and do those acts of virtue which are, in that state, the proper services of God, and such which men in bondage and fear are not capable of doing when they come to the appointed days of mourning. And, indeed, if men would but place their design of being happy in the nobleness, courage, and perfect resolutions of doing handsome things, and passing through our unavoidable necessities, in the contempt and despite of the things of this world, and in holy living and the perfective desires of our natures, the longings and pursuances after heaven; it is certain they could not be made miserable by chance and change, by sickness and death.

But we are so softened and made effeminate with delicate thoughts, and meditations of ease, and brutish satisfactions, that if our death come before we have seized upon a great fortune, or enjoy the promises of the fortune-tellers, we esteem ourselves to be robbed of our goods, to be mocked, and miserable.

S U F F E R I N G .

"The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."—I Peter iii. 4.

ROPOUND to your eyes and heart the example of the holy Jesus upon the cross; He endured more for thee than thou canst either for thyself or Him: and remember, that if we be put to suffer, and do suffer, in a good cause, or in a good manner, so that in any sense our sufferings be conformable to His sufferings, or can be capable of being united to His, we shall reign together with Him. The highway of the cross, which the King of suffering hath trodden before us, is the way to ease, to a kingdom, and to felicity.

And be confident, that although God often sends pardon without correction, yet He never sends correction without pardon, unless it be thy fault: and therefore take every or any affliction as an earnest penny of thy pardon: and, upon condition there may be peace with God, let any thing be welcome that He can send as its instrument or condition. Suffer therefore God to choose His own circumstances of adopting thee, and be content to be under discipline, when the reward of that is to become the son of God: and by such inflictions He hews and breaks thy body, first dressing it to funeral, and then preparing it for immortality.

THE BUSINESS OF LIVING AND DYING WELL.

"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."—Rom. viii. 13.

SENECA said well, "There is no science or art in the world so hard as to live and die well; the professors of other arts are vulgar and many;" but he that knows how to do this business is certainly instructed to eternity. But then let me remember this, that a wise person will also put most upon the greatest interest. Common prudence will teach us this.

No man will hire a general to cut wood, or shake hay with a sceptre, or spend his soul and all his faculties upon the purchase of a cockle-shell; but he will fit instruments to the dignity and exigence of the design: and, therefore, since heaven is so glorious a state, and so certainly designed for us if we please, let us spend all that we have, all our passions and affections, all our study and industry, all our desires and stratagems, all our witty and ingenious faculties, towards the arriving thither; whither if we do come, every minute will infinitely pay for all the troubles of our whole life; if we do not, we shall have the reward of fools, an unpitied and an upbraided misery.

APRIL 18

TRIBULATION.

"Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord."—

Psa. xciv. 12.

GOD could not choose but be pleased with the delicious accents of martyrs, when in their tortures they cried out nothing but "Holy Jesus" and "Blessed be God;" and they also themselves who, with a hearty resignation to the Divine pleasure, can delight in God's severe dispensation, will have the transportations of cherubim when they enter into the joys of God. If God be delicious to His servants when He smites them, He will be nothing but ravishments and ecstasies to their spirits when He refreshes them with the overflowings of joy in the day of recompences.

No man is more miserable than he that hath no adversity; that man is not tried, whether he be good or bad: and God never crowns those virtues which are only faculties and dispositions; but every act of virtue is an ingredient into reward. Our virtues are but in the seed when the grace of God comes upon us first; but this grace must be thrown into broken furrows, and must twice feel the cold, and twice feel the heat, and be softened with storms and showers; and then it will arise into fruitfulness and harvests.

ENCROACHMENT OF SIN.

"Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."—
2 Peter iii. 17.

A TAPER, when its crown of flame is newly blown off, retains a nature so symbolical to light, that it will with greediness rekindle and snatch a ray from the neighbour fire. So is the soul of man when it is newly fallen into sin; although God be angry with it, and the state of God's favour and its own graciousness is interrupted, yet the habit is not naturally changed; and still God leaves some roots of virtue standing, and the man is modest, or apt to be made ashamed, and he is not grown a bold sinner; but if he sleeps on it, and returns again to the same sin, and by degrees grows in love with it, and gets the custom, and the strangeness of it is taken away, then it is his master, and is swelled into a heap, and is abetted by use and corroborated by newly entertained principles, and is insinuated into his nature, and hath possessed his affections, and tainted the will and the understanding; and by this time a man is in the state of a decaying merchant, his accounts are so great and so intricate, and so much in arrear, that to examine it will be but to represent the particulars of his calamity: therefore, they think it better to pull the napkin before their eyes, than to stare upon the circumstances of their death.

APRIL 20


DEAD RELIGION.

"This man's religion is vain."—James i. 26.

AS our duty must be whole, so it must be fervent; for a languishing body may have all its parts, and yet be useless to many purposes of nature; and you may reckon all the joints of a dead man, but the heart is cold, and the joints are stiff and fit for nothing but for the little people that creep in graves. And so are very many men; if you sum up the accounts of their religion, they can reckon days and months of religion, various offices, charity and prayers, reading and meditation, faith and knowledge, catechism and sacraments, duty to God and duty to princes, paying debts and provision for children, confessions and tears, discipline in families, and love of good people; and, it may be, you shall not reprove their numbers, or find any lines unfilled in their tables of accounts. But when you have handled all this and considered, you will find at last you have taken a dead man by the hand; there is not a finger wanting, but they are stiff as icicles.

GOD'S GIFT OF TIME.

"As for man, his days are as grass."—Psa. ciii. 5.

OD gives us time by succession, by parts and little periods. For it is very remarkable, that God who giveth plenteously to all creatures, —He hath scattered the firmament with stars, as a man sows corn in his fields, in a multitude bigger than the capacities of human order; He hath made so much variety of creatures, and gives us great choice of meats and drinks, although any one of both kinds would have served our needs, and so in all instances of nature;—yet in the distribution of our time God seems to be straight-handed, and gives it to us, not as nature gives us rivers, enough to drown us, but drop by drop, minute after minute, so that we never can have two minutes together, but He takes away one when He gives us another. This should teach us to value our time, since God so values it, and, by His so small distribution of it, tells us it is the most precious thing we have.

APRIL 22

LIVE AS YOU WOULD DIE.

"The sting of death is sin."—1 Cor. xv. 56.

WHEN we come to die indeed, we shall be very much put to it to stand firm upon the two feet of a Christian, faith and patience. When we ourselves are to use the articles, to turn our former discourses into present practice, and to feel what we never felt before, we shall find it to be quite another thing to be willing presently to quit this life and all our present possessions for the hopes of a thing which we were never suffered to see, and such a thing of which we may fail so many ways, and of which, if we fail any way, we are miserable for ever. Then we shall find how much we have need to have secured the Spirit of God and the grace of faith by an habitual, perfect, unmovable resolution.

The same, also, is the case of patience, which will be assaulted with sharp pains, disturbed fancies, great fears, want of a present mind, natural weaknesses, frauds of the devil, and a thousand accidents and imperfections.

RECOGNITION OF THE OMNI- PRESENCE OF GOD.

"Be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create."—
Isa. lxxv. 18.

PLACE thyself in God's presence, and behold Him with an eye of faith; and let thy desires actually fix on Him, as the object of thy worship, and the reason of thy hope, and the fountain of thy blessing. Let every thing you see represent to your spirit the presence, the excellency, and the power of God; and let your conversation with the creatures lead you unto the Creator; for so shall your actions be done, more frequently, with an actual eye to God's presence, by your often seeing Him in the glass of the creation. In the face of the sun you may see God's beauty; in the fire you may feel His heat warming; in the water, His gentleness to refresh you: He it is that comforts your spirit when you have taken cordials; it is the dew of heaven that makes your field give you bread. This philosophy, which is obvious to every man's experience, is a good advantage to our piety; and, by this act of understanding, our wills are checked from violence and misdemeanour.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

"Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."—1 Cor. xi. 27.

NO man must dare to approach to the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper, if he be in a state of any one sin, unless he have entered into the state of repentance, that is, of sorrow and amendment; lest it be said concerning him, as it was concerning Judas, "the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table:" and he that receiveth Christ into an impure soul or body, first turns his most excellent nourishment into poison, and then feeds upon it.


Every communicant must first have examined himself; that is, tried the condition and state of his soul, searched out the secret ulcers, inquired out its weaknesses and indiscretions, and all those aptnesses where it is exposed to temptation; that by finding out its diseases he may find a cure.

This examination must be a man's own act and inquisition into his life; but then also it should lead a man on to run to those whom the great Physician of our souls, Christ Jesus, hath appointed to minister physic to our diseases; that in all great dangers and great accidents we may be assisted for comfort and remedy, for medicine and caution.

APRIL 26

ARRANGEMENT FOR EACH DAY.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."—Eccl. iii. 1.

 T. AMBROSE divided every day into three *tertias* of employment: Eight hours he spent in the necessities of nature and recreation; eight hours in charity and doing assistance to others, despatching their businesses, reconciling their enmities, reproving their vices, correcting their errors, instructing their ignorances, transacting the affairs of his diocese; and the other eight hours he spent in study and prayer. If we were thus minute and curious in the spending our time, it is impossible but our life would seem very long. For so have I seen an amorous person tell the minutes of his absence from his fancied joy, and while he told the sands of his hour-glass, or the throbs and little beatings of his watch, by dividing an hour into so many members, he spun out its length by number, and so translated a day into the tediousness of a month. And if we tell our days by canonical hours of prayer, our weeks by a constant revolution of fasting-days or days of special devotion, and over all these draw a black cypress, a veil of penitential sorrow and severe mortification, we shall soon answer the calumny and objection of a short life.

APRIL 26

THE WORK OF LIFE.

"We should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."—Titus ii. 12.

WE complain that our life is short, and yet we throw away much of it, and are weary of many of its parts: we complain that the day is long, and the night is long, and we want company, and seek out arts to drive the time away, and then weep because it is gone too soon. But so the treasure of the capitol is but a small estate when Caesar comes to finger it, and to pay with it all his legions; and the revenue of all Egypt and the eastern provinces was but a little sum when they were to support the luxury of Mark Antony, and feed the riot of Cleopatra; but a thousand crowns is a vast proportion to be spent in the cottage of a frugal person, or to feed a hermit. Just so is our life: it is too short to serve the ambition of a haughty prince or a usurping rebel; too little time to purchase great wealth, to satisfy the pride of a vain-glorious fool, to trample upon all the enemies of our just or unjust interest: but for the obtaining virtue, for the purchase of sobriety and modesty, for the actions of religion, God gave us time sufficient, if we make the "out-goings of the morning and evening," that is, our infancy and old age, to be taken into the computations of a man.

APRIL 27

LOVE OF THE WORLD.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."—I John ii. 15.

THEY are mistaken and miserable persons who, since Adam planted thorns round about Paradise, are more in love with that hedge than all the fruits of the garden; sottish admirers of things that hurt them, of sweet poisons, gilded daggers, and silken halters. Tell them they have lost a bounteous friend, a rich purchase, a fair farm, a wealthy donative, and you dissolve their patience; it is an evil bigger than their spirit can bear; it brings sickness and death; they can neither eat nor sleep with such a sorrow. But if you represent to them the evils of a vicious habit, and the dangers of a state of sin; if you tell them they have displeased God, and interrupted their hopes of heaven, it may be they will be so civil as to hear it patiently, and to treat you kindly, and first to commend, and then forget your story, because they prefer this world with all its sorrows before the pure unmingled felicities of heaven. But it is strange that any man should be so passionately in love with the thorns which grow on his own ground that he should wear them for armlets, and knit them in his shirt, and prefer them before a kingdom and immortality.

APRIL 28

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MORTALITY.

"Thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."—

Prov. xxvii. 1.

THOUGH we must not look so far off, and pry abroad, yet we must be busy near at hand; we must, with all arts of the spirit, seize upon the present, because it passes from us while we speak, and because in it all our certainty does consist. We must take our waters as out of a torrent and sudden shower, which will quickly cease dropping from above, and quickly cease running in our channels here below. This instant will never return again, and yet, it may be, this instant will declare or secure the fortune of a whole eternity. The old Greeks and Romans taught us the prudence of this rule; but Christianity teaches us the religion of it. They so seized upon the present, that they would lose nothing of the day's pleasure. "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die;" that was their philosophy.

I had reason to say that Christianity taught us to turn this into religion. For he that by a present and constant holiness secures the present, and makes it useful to his noblest purposes, he turns his condition into his best advantage, by making his unavoidable fate become his necessary religion.

THE SERVICE OF GOD.

"Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."—Heb. xii. 28.

IT is necessary that every man should consider, that, since God hath given him an excellent nature, wisdom and choice, an understanding soul, and an immortal spirit; having made him lord over the beasts, and but a little lower than the angels; He hath also appointed him for a work and a service great enough to employ those abilities, and hath also designed him to a state of life after this, to which he can only arrive by that service and obedience. And therefore, as every man is wholly God's own portion by the title of creation, so all our labours and care, all our powers and faculties, must be wholly employed in the service of God, and even all the days of our life; that, this life being ended, we may live with Him for ever.

Neither is it sufficient that we think of the service of God as a work of the least necessity, or of small employment, but that it be done by us as God intended it; and that it be done with great earnestness and passion, with much zeal and desire; that we refuse no labour; that we bestow upon it much time; that we use the best guides, and arrive at the end of glory by all the ways of grace, of prudence, and religion.

APRIL 30

UNCERTAINTY OF THIS LIFE.

"For what is your life? It is even a vapour."—

James iv. 14.

A MAN is a bubble, said the Greek proverb, which Lucian represents with advantages and its proper circumstances to this purpose; saying, that all the world is a storm, and men rise up in their several generations, like bubbles descending from God and the dew of heaven, from a tear and a drop of rain, from nature and Providence; and some of these instantly sink into the deluge of their first parent, and are hidden in a sheet of water, having had no other business in the world but to be born, that they might be able to die; others float up and down two or three turns, and suddenly disappear, and give their place to others: and they that live longest upon the face of the waters are in perpetual motion, restless and uneasy; and, being crushed with the great drop of a cloud, sink into flatness and a froth; the change not being great, it being hardly possible it should be more a nothing than it was before. So is every man: he is born in vanity and sin; he comes into the world like morning mushrooms, soon thrusting up their heads into the air, and conversing with their kindred of the same production, and as soon they turn into dust and forgetfulness.

SANCTIFYING DAILY WORK.

"All things are of God."—2 Cor. v. 18.

ALTHOUGH the things of God are by a necessary zeal to be preferred before the things of the world, yet we must take heed that we do not reckon religion, and orders of worshipping, only to be "the things of God," and all other duties to be the "things of the world;" for it was a pharisaical device to cry *Corban*, and to refuse to relieve their aged parents. It is good to give to a church, but it is better to give to the poor; and though they must be both provided for, yet in cases of dispute mercy carries the cause against religion and the temple. And although Mary was commended for choosing the better part, yet Mary had done worse, if she had been at the foot of her Master when she should have relieved a perishing brother. Martha was troubled with much serving; that was "more than need," and therefore she was to blame; and sometimes hearing in some circumstances may be "more than needs;" and some women are "troubled with over-much hearing," and then they had better have been serving the necessities of their house.

MAY 2

WASTE OF TIME.

"Behold, Thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth."—Psa. xxxix. 5.

WHEN he saw his army of 2,300,000 men, Xerxes wept sadly, because he considered that within a hundred years all the youth of that army should be dust and ashes: and yet, as Seneca well observes of him, he was the man that should bring them to their graves; and he consumed all that army in two years for whom he feared and wept the death after a hundred. Just so we do all. We complain that within thirty or forty years, a little more or a great deal less, we shall descend again into the bowels of our mother, and that our life is too short for any great employment; and yet we throw away five-and-thirty years of our forty, and the remaining five we divide between art and nature, civility and customs, necessity and convenience, prudent counsels and religion: but the portion of the last is little and contemptible, and yet that little is all that we can prudently account of our lives. We bring that fate and that death near us of whose approach we are so sadly apprehensive.

ZEALOUS FAITH.

"It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing."—Gal. iv. 18.

FE that means to please God by his faith, must have his faith begotten in him by the Spirit of God, and proper arguments of religion; he must profess it without fear, he must dare to die for it, and resolve to live according to its institution; he must grow more confident and more holy, have fewer doubtings and more virtues; he must be resolute and constant, far from indifferency, and above secular regards; he must by it regulate his life, and value it above his life; he must "contend earnestly for the faith," by the most prevailing arguments, by the arguments of holy living and ready dying, by zeal and patience, by conformity and humility, by reducing words to actions, fair discourses to perfect persuasions, by loving the article, and increasing in the knowledge and love of God, and His Son Jesus Christ; and then his faith is not negligent, deceitful, artificial, and improper; but true, and holy, and reasonable, and useful, zealous and sufficient; and therefore can never be reprov-
ed.

MAY 4

PERSEVERANCE NECESSARY TO THE CHRISTIAN.

"By patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality."—Rom. ii. 7.

I HAVE seen a fair structure begun with art and care, and raised to half its stature, and then it stood still by the misfortune or negligence of the owner, and the rain descended, and dwelt in its joints, and supplanted the contexture of its pillars, and having stood awhile, like the antiquated temple of a deceased oracle, it fell into a hasty age, and sunk upon its own knees, and so descended into ruin. So is the imperfect, unfinished spirit of a man; it lays the foundation of a holy resolution, and strengthens it with vows and arts of prosecution; it raises up the walls, sacraments, and prayers, reading, and holy ordinances; and holy actions begin with a slow motion, and the building stays, and the spirit is weary, and the soul is naked, and exposed to temptation, and in the days of storm takes in every thing that can do it mischief; and it is faint and sick, listless and tired, and it stands till its own weight wearies the foundation, and then declines to death and sad disorder.

DAILY EXAMINATION DESIRABLE.

"Prove your own selves."—2 Cor. xiii. 5.

THE way to prevent God's anger is to be angry with ourselves; and, by examining our actions, and condemning the criminal, by being assessors in God's tribunal, at least we shall obtain the favour of the court. As, therefore, every night we must make our bed the memorial of our grave, so let our evening thoughts be an image of the day of judgment.

This advice was so reasonable and proper an instrument of virtue, that it was taught even to the scholars of Pythagoras by their master: "Let not sleep seize upon the regions of your senses before you have three times recalled the conversation and accidents of the day." Examine what you have committed against the Divine law, what you have omitted of your duty, and in what you have made use of the Divine grace to the purposes of virtue and religion; joining the judge, reason, to the legislative mind or conscience, that God may reign there as a lawgiver and a judge. Then Christ's kingdom is set up in our hearts: then we always live in the eye of our Judge, and live by the measures of reason, religion, and sober counsels.

MAY 6

THE FOUNTAIN OF THE HEART.

"Blessed are they that . . . seek Him with the whole heart."—Psa. cxix. 2.

HE that secures the heart, secures all the rest; because this is the principle of all the moral actions of the whole man, and the hand obeys this, and the feet walk by its prescriptions; we eat and drink by measures which the soul desires and limits; and though the natural actions of men are not subject to choice and rule, yet the animal actions are under discipline; and although it cannot be helped but we shall desire, yet our desires can receive measures, and the laws of circumstances, and be reduced to order, and nature be changed into grace, and the animal actions (such as are eating, drinking, laughing, weeping, &c.) shall become actions of religion; and those that are simply natural (such as being hungry and thirsty) shall be adopted in the retinue of religion, and become religious by being ordered, or chastised, or suffered, or directed; and therefore God requires the heart, because He requires all. He that seals up a fountain may drink up all the waters alone, and may best appoint the channel where it shall run, and what grounds it shall refresh.

A CHASTENED WILL.

"God . . . will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."—I Cor. x. 13.

THESE things which God requires of us, and exacts from us with mighty penalties, these He hath made us able to perform; for He knows that we have no strength but what He gives us; and therefore, as He binds burdens upon our shoulders, so He gives us strength to bear them: and therefore, he that says he cannot forgive, says only that his lust is stronger than his religion; his flesh prevails upon his spirit. For what necessity can a man have to curse him whom he calls enemy? or to sue him, or kill him, or do him any spite? A man may serve all his needs of nature, though he does nothing of all this; and if he be willing, what hinders him to love, to pardon, to wish well, to desire? The willing is the doing in this case; and he that says he is willing to do his duty, but he cannot, does not understand what he says. For all the duty of the inner man consists in the actions of the will, and there they are seated, and to it all the inferior faculties obey in those things which are direct emanations and effects of will.

MAY 8

WE MAKE OUR OWN FATE.

"Every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

—Rom. xiv. 12.

IN all the contingencies of chance and variety of action, remember that thou art the maker of thy own fortune, and of thy own sin; charge not God with it, either before or after; the violence of thy own passion is no superinduced necessity from Him, and the events of providence in all its strange variety can give no authority or patronage to a foul forbidden action, though the next chance of war or fortune be prosperous and rich. An Egyptian robber, sleeping under a rotten wall, was awakened by Serapis, and sent away from the ruin; but being quit from the danger, and seeing the wall to slide, he thought the demon loved his crime, because he had so strangely preserved him from a sudden and a violent death. But Serapis told him, "I saved you from the wall, to reserve you for the wheel;" from a short and private death, to a painful and disgraceful: and so it is very frequently in the events of human affairs; men are saved from one death, and reserved for another; or are preserved here, to be destroyed hereafter.

REASONABLENESS OF FAITH.

"By grace are ye saved through faith."—Eph. ii. 8.

FAITH converses with the angels, and antecedates the hymns of glory: every man that hath this grace, is as certain that there are glories for him, if he perseveres in duty, as if he had heard and sung the thanksgiving-song for the blessed sentence of doomsday. And therefore it is no matter, if these things are separate and distant objects; none but children and fools are taken with the present trifle, and neglect a distant blessing, of which they have credible and believed notices. Did the merchant see the pearls and the wealth he designed to get in the trade of twenty years? And is it possible that a child should, when he learns the first rudiments of grammar, know what excellent things there are in learning, whither he designs his labour and his hopes? We labour for that which is uncertain, and distant, and seen with diminution, and a troubled ray; and what excuse can there be that we do not labour for that, which is told us by God, and preached by his only Son, and confirmed by miracles, and which Christ Himself died to purchase?

MAY 10

RESOLUTIONS VAIN BY THEMSELVES.

"Without Me ye can do nothing."—John xv. 5.

SOME men are wise and know their weaknesses, and to prevent their startings back will make fierce and strong resolutions, and bind up their gaps with thorns, and make a new hedge about their spirits; and what then? This shows, indeed, that "the spirit is willing;" but the storm arises, and winds blow, and rain descends, and presently the earth trembles, and the whole fabric falls into ruin and disorder. A resolution (such as we usually make) is nothing but a little trench, which every child can step over; and there is no civil man that commits a willing sin, but he does it against his resolution. And what Christian lives, that will not say and think that he hath repented in some degree; and yet still they commit sin, that is, they break all their holy purposes as readily as they lose a dream; and so great is our weakness, that to most men the strength of a resolution is just such a restraint as he suffers, who is imprisoned in a curtain, and secured with doors and bars of the finest linen: for though "the spirit be strong" to resolve, "the flesh is weak" to keep it.

GODLY FEAR.

"O fear the Lord, ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him."—Psa. xxxiv. 9.

FEAR is the duty we owe to God, as being the God of power and justice, the great Judge of heaven and earth, the avenger of the cause of widows, the patron of the poor, and the advocate of the oppressed, a mighty God and terrible: and so essential an enemy to sin, that He spared not His own Son, but gave Him over to death, and to become a sacrifice, when He took upon Him our nature, and became a person obliged for our guilt. Fear is the great bridle of intemperance, the modesty of the spirit, and the restraint of gaieties and dissoluteness; it is the girdle to the soul, and the handmaid to repentance; the arrest of sin, and the cure or antidote to the spirit of reprobation; it preserves our apprehensions of the Divine Majesty, and hinders our single actions from combining to sinful habits; it is the mother of consideration, and the nurse of sober counsels; and it puts the soul to fermentation and activity, making it pass from trembling to caution, from caution to carefulness, from carefulness to watchfulness, from thence to prudence; and, by the gates and progresses of repentance, it leads the soul on to love, and to felicity, and to joys in God, that shall never cease again.

MAY 12

PURE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God."—
Psa. xlii. 2.

THE river that runs slow and creeps by the banks, and begs leave of every turf to let it pass, is drawn into little hollownesses, and spends itself in smaller portions, and dies with diversion; but when it runs with vigorousness and a full stream, and breaks down every obstacle, making it even as its own brow, it stays not to be tempted with little avocation, and to creep into holes, but runs into the sea through full and useful channels. So is a man's prayer, if it moves upon the feet of an abated appetite; it wanders into the society of every trifling accident, and stays at the corners of the fancy, and talks with every object it meets, and cannot arrive at heaven; but when it is carried upon the wings of passion and strong desires, a swift motion and a hungry appetite, it passes on through all the intermedial regions of clouds, and stays not till it dwells at the foot of the throne, where mercy sits, and thence sends holy showers of refreshment.

TEMPTATION ON ALL SIDES.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

—Matt. vi. 13.

EVERY step is a danger for a valiant man, when he walks in his enemy's country; and so it is with us: we are espied by God, and observed by angels: we are betrayed within, and assaulted without; the devil is our enemy, and we are fond of his mischiefs; he is crafty, and we love to be abused; he is malicious, and we are credulous; he is powerful, and we are weak; he is too ready of himself, and yet we desire to be tempted; the world is alluring, and we consider not its vanity; sin puts on all pleasures, and yet we take it, though it puts us to pain: in short, we are vain, and credulous, and sensual, and trifling; we are tempted, and tempt ourselves, and we sin frequently, and contract evil habits, and they become second natures, and bring in a second death miserable and eternal: every man hath need to fear, because every man hath weakness, and enemies, and temptations, and dangers, and causes of his own.

MAY 14

RELAPSES INTO SIN.

"The last state of that man is worse than the first."—

Matt. xii. 45.

HE that falls from virtue to vice again, adds the circumstance of ingratitude to his load of sins; he sins against God's mercy, and puts out his own eyes; he strives to unlearn what with labour he hath purchased, and despises the trouble of his holy days, and throws away the reward of virtue for an interest, which himself despised the first day in which he began to take sober counsels: he throws himself back in the accounts of eternity, and slides to the bottom of the hill, from whence with sweat and labour of his hands and knees he had long been creeping; he descends from the spirit to the flesh, from honour to dishonour, from wise principles to unthrifty practices; like one of "the vainer fellows," who grows a fool, and a prodigal, and a beggar, because he delights in inconsideration, in the madness of drunkenness, and the quiet of a lazy and unprofitable life. So that this man hath great cause to fear; and, if he does, his fear is as the fear of enemies and not sons.

HUMBLE PRAYER.

"The Lord . . . forgetteth not the cry of the humble."—Psa. ix. 11, 12.

HE is rightly modest towards God, who, without confidence in himself, but not without confidence in God's mercy, or without great humility of person, and reverence of address, presents his prayers to God as earnestly as he can; provided always, that in the greatest of our desires, and holy violence, we submit to God's will, and desire Him to choose for us. Our modesty to God in prayers hath no other measures but these: 1. Distrust of ourselves; 2. Confidence in God; 3. Humility of person; 4. Reverence of address; and, 5. Submission to God's will. These are all, unless you also will add that of Solomon, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." These things being observed, let your importunity be as great as it can; it is still the more likely to prevail, by how much it is the more earnest, and signified and represented by the most offices extraordinary.

MAY 16

HELPING JESUS BY IMITATING HIM.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."—
Matt. xxv. 40.

HE that gives alms to the poor, takes Jesus by the hand; he that patiently endures injuries and affronts, helps Him to bear His cross; he that comforts his brother in affliction, gives an amiable kiss of peace to Jesus; he that bathes his own and his neighbour's sins in tears of penance and compassion, washes his Master's feet. We lead Jesus into the recesses of our heart by holy meditations; and we enter into His heart, when we express Him in our actions; for so the apostle says, "He that is in Christ, walks as He also walked." Thus the actions of our life relate to Him by way of worship and religion; but the use is admirable and effectual, when our actions refer to Him as to our copy, and we transcribe the original to the life. He that considers, with what affections of spirit, with what effusions of love, Jesus prayed; what fervours and assiduity, what innocency of wish, what modesty of posture, what subordination to His Father, and conformity to the Divine pleasure, were in all His devotions, is taught and excited to holy and religious prayer.

A GOOD MAN'S PRAYER.

"When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any."—Mark xi. 25.

THE that prays to God with an angry, that is, with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that retires into a battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the out-quarters of an army, and chooses a frontier-garrison to be wise in. Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and therefore is contrary to that attention which presents our prayers in a right line to God. For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of his wings; till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air, about his ministeries here below. So is the prayer of a good man.

THE WAY IN WHICH WE SHALL BE JUDGED.

"Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."—Matt. xvi. 19.

THE last judgment shall be transacted by the same principles by which we are guided here; not by strange and secret propositions, or by the fancies of men, or by the subtilties of useless distinctions or evil persuasions; not by the scruples of the credulous for the interest of sects, nor the proverbs of prejudice, nor the uncertain definitions of them that give laws to subjects by expounding the decrees of princes; but by the plain rules of justice, by the ten commandments, by the first apprehensions of conscience, by the plain rules of Scripture, and the rules of an honest mind, and a certain justice. So that by this restraint and limit of the final sentence, we are secured we shall not fall by scruple or by ignorance, by interest or by faction, by false persuasions of others or invincible prejudice of our own, but we shall stand or fall by plain and easy propositions, by chastity or uncleanness, by justice or injustice, by robbery or restitution.

THE BAD ARE ALWAYS FEARFUL.

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth."—
Prov. xxviii. 1.

REMEMBER St. Crispian tells of a good man who, in his agony of death, saw a phantasm of a noble angelical shape, who, frowning and angry, said to him, "Ye cannot endure sickness, ye are troubled at the evils of the world, and yet you are loth to die and be quit of them: what shall I do to you?" Although this is apt to represent every man's condition more or less, yet concerning persons of wicked lives it hath in it too many sad degrees of truth. They are impatient of sorrow, and justly fearful of death, because they know not how to comfort themselves in the evil accidents of their lives; and their conscience is too polluted to take death for sanctuary, to hope to have amends made to their condition by the sentence of the day of judgment. Evil and sad is their condition, who cannot be contented here, nor blessed hereafter; whose life is their misery, and their conscience is their enemy, whose grave is their prison, and death their undoing, and the sentence of doomsday the beginning of an intolerable condition.

MAY 20

CRUCIFYING JESUS AFRESH.

"He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."—

John xii. 48.

ALL the pains and passions, the sorrows and the groans, the humility and poverty, the labours and the watchings, the prayers and the sermons, the miracles and the prophecies, the whip and the nails, the death and the burial, the shame and the smart, the cross and the grave, of Jesus, shall be laid upon thy score, if thou hast refused the mercies and design of all their holy ends and purposes. And if we remember what a calamity that was, which broke the Jewish nation in pieces, when Christ came to judge them for their murdering Him who was their King and the Prince of life; and consider, that this was but a dark image of the terrors of the day of judgment; we may then apprehend, that there is some strange unspeakable evil that attends them that are guilty of this death and of so much evil to their Lord. Now it is certain, if thou wilt not be saved by His death, thou art guilty of His death; if thou wilt not suffer Him to save thee, thou art guilty of destroying Him.

JUDGMENT DAY.

"It is the day of the Lord's vengeance."—Isa. xxxiv. 8.

THE that stands in a church-yard in the time of a great plague, and hears the passing-bell perpetually telling the sad stories of death, and sees crowds of infected bodies pressing to their graves, and others sick and tremulous, and death, dressed up in all the images of sorrow, round about him, is not supported in his spirit by the variety of his sorrow. And at doomsday, when the terrors are universal, besides that it is itself so much greater, because it can affright the whole world, it is also made greater by communication and a sorrowful influence; grief being then strongly infectious, when there is no variety of state, but an entire kingdom of fear; and amazement is the king of all our passions, and all the world its subjects. And that shriek must needs be terrible, when millions of men and women, at the same instant, shall fearfully cry out, and the noise shall mingle with the trumpet of the archangel, with the thunders of the dying and groaning heavens, and the crack of the dissolving world, when the whole fabric of nature shall shake into dissolution and eternal ashes.

MAY 22

PRAYER AND WORK.

"Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour."—1 Cor. iii. 8.

WHATEVER we beg of God, let us also work for it, if the thing be matter of duty, or a consequent to industry; for God loves to bless labour and to reward it, but not to support idleness. And therefore our blessed Saviour in His sermons joins watchfulness with prayer, for God's graces are but assistances, not new creations of the whole habit, in every instant or period of our life. Read Scriptures, and then pray to God for understanding. Pray against temptation; but you must also resist the devil, and then he will flee from you. Ask of God competency of living; but you must also work with your hands the things that are honest, that ye may have to supply in time of need. We can but do our endeavour, and pray for blessing, and then leave the success with God; and beyond this we cannot deliberate, we cannot take care—but, so far, we must.

To this purpose let every man study his prayers and read his duty in his petitions. For the body of our prayer is the sum of our duty, and as we must ask of God whatsoever we need, so we must labour for all that we ask.

VANITY OF LIFE.


"If I wait, the grave is mine house."—Job xvii. 13.

IT is a mighty change that is made by the death of every person, and it is visible to us who are alive. Reckon but from the sprightfulness of youth and the fair cheeks and full eyes of childhood, from the vigorousness and strong flexure of the joints of five-and-twenty, to the hollowness and dead paleness, to the loathsomeness and horror of a three days' burial, and we shall perceive the distance to be very great and very strange. But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and, at first, it was fair as the morning, and full with the dew of heaven, as a lamb's fleece; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness, and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age: it bowed the head and broke its stalk; and, at night, having lost some of its leaves and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and out-worn faces. The same is the portion of every man and every woman; the heritage of worms and serpents, rottenness and cold dishonour, and our beauty so changed that our acquaintance quickly know us not.

MAY 24

GOD'S TEACHING.

"His merciful kindness is great toward us."—
Psa. cxvii. 2.

OD hath opened all the windows of heaven, and sent the Sun of righteousness with glorious apparition, and hath discovered the abysses of His own wisdom, made the second person in the Trinity to be the doctor and preacher of His sentences and secrets, and the third person to be His amanuensis or scribe, and our hearts to be the book in which the doctrine is written, and miracles and prophècies to be its arguments, and all the world to be the verification of it; and those leaves contain within their folds all that excellent morality which right reason picked up after the shipwreck of nature, and all those wise sayings which singly made so many men famous for preaching some one of them; all these Christ gathered, and added some more out of the immediate book of revelation. So that now the wisdom of God hath made every man's heart to be the true Veronica, in which He hath imprinted His own lineaments so perfectly, that we may dress ourselves like God, and have the air and features of Christ our elder Brother.

UNSTABLE REPENTANCE.

"Examine me, O Lord . . . try my reins and my heart."—Psa. xxvi. 2.

ARE we so great strangers to our own weakness and unworthiness, as not to remember when God scared us with judgments in the neighbourhood, when we lived in a great plague, or if we were ever in a storm, or God had sent a sickness upon us? Then we may please to remember, that repentance was our business, that we designed mountains of piety, renewed our holy purposes, made vows and solemn sacraments to God to become penitent and obedient persons. And we may also remember, without much considering, that as soon as God began to forbear us, we would no longer forbear to sin, but add flame to flame, a heap of sins to a treasure of wrath, already too big; but like Pharaoh or Herod, or like the ox and mule, more hard and callous for our stripes; and melted in the fire, and frozen harder in the cold; worse for all our afflictions, and the worse for all God's judgments; not bettered by His goodness, nor mollified by His threatenings.

MAY 26

THE SPIRIT OF GOD POURED OUT.

"The spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."—

1 Peter iv. 14.

IN the gospel, the Spirit is given without measure: first poured forth upon our head Christ Jesus; then descending upon the beard of Aaron, the fathers of the church; and thence falling, like the tears of the balsam of Judea, upon the foot of the plant, upon the lowest of the people. And this is given regularly to all that ask it, to all that can receive it, and by a solemn ceremony, and conveyed by a sacrament: and is now, not the daughter of a voice, but the mother of many voices, of divided tongues, and united hearts; of the tongues of prophets, and the duty of saints; of the sermons of apostles, and the wisdom of governors. It is the parent of boldness and fortitude to martyrs, the fountain of learning to doctors, an ocean of all things excellent to all who are within the ship and bounds of the catholic church: so that old men and young men, maidens and boys, the scribe and the unlearned, the judge and the advocate, the priest and the people, are full of the Spirit, if they belong to God.

CONSECRATION TO CHRIST.

"The love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."—

Eph. iii. 19.

DEAREST Jesus, suffer no unclean spirit or unholy thought to come near Thy dwelling, lest it defile the ground where Thy holy feet have trod. O teach me so to walk, that I may never disrepute the honour of my religion, nor stain the holy robe which Thou hast now put upon my soul, nor break my holy vows, which I have made, and Thou hast sealed, nor lose my right of inheritance, my privilege of being co-heir with Jesus, into the hope of which I have now further entered. But be Thou pleased to love me with the love of a father, and a brother, and a husband, and a lord; and make me to serve Thee in the communion of saints, in receiving the sacrament, in the practice of all holy virtues, in the imitation of Thy life, and conformity to Thy sufferings; that I, having now put on the Lord Jesus, may marry His loves, and His enmities, may desire His glory, and may obey His laws, and be united to His Spirit, and in the day of the Lord I may be found having on the wedding garment, and bearing in my body and soul the marks of the Lord Jesus, that I may enter into the joy of my Lord, and partake of His glories for ever and ever. Amen.

MAY 28

CONFESSION TO THE SAVIOUR.

"Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."—Matt. viii. 17.

LORD, Thou shalt find my heart full of cares and worldly desires, cheated with love of riches, and neglect of holy things, proud and unmortified, false and crafty to deceive itself, intricated and entangled with difficult cases of conscience, with knots which my own wildness and inconsideration and impatience have tied and shuffled together. O my dearest Lord, if Thou canst behold such an impure seat, behold the place to which Thou art invited is full of passion and prejudice, evil principles and evil habits, peevish and disobedient, lustful and intemperate, and full of sad remembrances, that I have often provoked to jealousy and to anger Thee my God, my dearest Saviour, Him that died for me, Him that suffered torments for me, that is infinitely good to me, and infinitely good and perfect in Himself. This, O dearest Saviour, is a sad truth, and I am heartily ashamed, and truly sorrowful for it, and do deeply hate all my sins, and am full of indignation against myself for so unworthy, so careless, so continued, so great a folly; and humbly beg of Thee to increase my sorrow, and my care, and my hatred against sin; and make my love to Thee swell up to a great grace, and then to glory and immensity.

MAY 29

PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN GRACES.

"Shew me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths."—

Psa. xxv. 4.



LORD GOD of infinite mercy, of infinite excellency, who hast sent Thy holy Son into the world to redeem us from an intolerable misery, and to teach us a holy religion, and to forgive us an infinite debt; give me Thy Holy Spirit, that my understanding and all faculties may be so resigned to the discipline and doctrine of my Lord, that I may be prepared in mind and will to die for the testimony of Jesus, and to suffer any affliction or calamity that shall offer to hinder my duty, or tempt me to shame, or sin, or apostacy; that the yoke of Jesus may become easy to me, and my love may do all the miracles of grace, till from grace it swell to glory, from earth to heaven, from duty to reward, from the imperfections of a beginning and still growing love, it may arrive to the consummation of an eternal and never-ceasing charity, through Jesus Christ, the Son of Thy love, the anchor of our hope, and the author and finisher of our faith: to whom, with Thee, O Lord God, Father of heaven and earth, and with Thy Holy Spirit, be all glory, and love, and obedience, and dominion, now and for ever. Amen.

MAY 30

MEDITATION ON THE RESURRECTION.

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead."—1 Cor. xv. 21.

THE grave could not hold Thee long, O holy and eternal Jesus; Thy body could not see corruption, neither could Thy soul be left in hell; Thou wert free among the dead, and Thou brakest the iron gates of death, and the bars and chains of the lower prisons. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob saw Thy day and rejoiced; and when Thou didst arise from Thy bed of darkness, and ledest the grave-clothes behind Thee, and didst put on a robe of glory (over which for forty days Thou didst wear a veil), and then entered into a cloud, and then into glory, then the powers of hell were confounded, then death lost its power and was swallowed up into victory; and though death is not quite destroyed, yet it is made harmless and without a sting, and the condition of human nature is made an entrance to eternal glory. And Thou art become the Prince of life, the first-fruits of the resurrection, the first-born from the dead, having made the way plain before our faces, that we may also arise again in the resurrection of the last day, when Thou shalt come again unto us, to render to every man according to his works.

RECOVERY FROM SIN.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."—
Matt. xxvi. 41.

AFTER the beginnings of thy recovery, be infinitely fearful of a relapse. For if all those arguments which God uses to us to preserve our innocence, and thy late danger, and thy fears, and the goodness of God making thee once to escape, and the shame of thy fall and the sense of thy own weaknesses, will not make thee watchful against a fall, especially knowing how much it costs a man to be restored, it will be infinitely more dangerous if ever thou fallest again ; not only for fear God should no more accept thee to pardon, but even thy own hopes will be made more desperate, and thy impatience greater, and thy shame turn to impudence, and thy own will be more estranged, violent, and refractory, and thy latter end will be worse than thy beginning. To which add this consideration : that thy sin, which was formerly in a good way of being pardoned, will not only return upon thee with all its own loads, but with the baseness of unthankfulness, and thou wilt be set as far back from heaven as ever ; and all thy former labours, and fears, and watchings, and agonies, will be reckoned for nothing.

JUNE 1

THE CHEMISTRY OF FAITH.


"The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing."—Rom. xv. 13.

HE that gave us Christ, hath given us all things with Him. As it is true to say that Matthew left all to follow Christ, so is it as true that he got all that can be wished by following Him.

It is the chemistry of faith (let me use that word) to turn all things into good and precious ore. It is Abraham's country in a strange land: Jacob's wages, when Laban defrauded him: Moses' honour, when he refused to be the son-in-law of Pharaoh's daughter: Rahab's security, when all Jericho besides did perish: David's rescue, when there was but a step between him and death: the power of the apostles, to be able to cast out devils: Mary Magdalen's sweet ointment, to take away the ill-savour of her sins. Plead, therefore, with the oratory of faith, and say, "Lord, I have no life but in Thee, I have no joy but in Thee, no salvation but in Thee: but I have all these in Thee; and how can my soul refuse to be comforted?"

THE COVETOUS MAN.

"He that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days."—
Prov. xxviii. 16.

OVETOUSNESS is the most fantastical and contradictory disease in the whole world: it must therefore be incurable, because it strives against its own cure. No man therefore abstains from meat, because he is hungry; nor from wine, because he loves it and needs it; but the covetous man does so, for he desires money passionately, because he says he needs it, and when he hath it he will need it still, because he dares not use it. Thus the ass carried wood and sweet herbs to the baths, but was never washed or perfumed himself: he heaped up sweets for others, while himself was filthy with smoke and ashes. And yet it is considerable; if the man can be content to feed hardly, and labour extremely, and watch carefully, and suffer affronts and disgrace, that he may get money more than he uses in his temperate and just needs, with how much ease might this man be happy! and with how great uneasiness and trouble does he make himself miserable!

JUNE 3

DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES.

"He that trusteth in his riches shall fall."—

Prov. xi. 28.

BY possessing more than we need, we cannot obtain so much power over our souls as not to require more. And certainly riches must deliver me from no evil, if the possession of them cannot take away the longings for them. If any man be thirsty, drink cools him; if he be hungry, eating meat satisfies him; and when a man is cold, and calls for a warm cloak, he is pleased if you give it him; but you trouble him if you load him with six or eight cloaks. Nature rests, and sits still, when she hath her portion; but that which exceeds it is a trouble and a burden: and, therefore, in true philosophy, no man is rich but he that is poor according to the common account: for when God hath satisfied those needs which He made, that is, all that is natural, whatsoever is beyond it is thirst and a disease; and, unless it be sent back again in charity or religion, can serve no end but vice or vanity. It can increase the appetite to represent the man poorer, and full of a new and artificial, unnatural need; but it never satisfies the need it makes, or makes the man richer. No wealth can satisfy the covetous desire of wealth.

A GOOD LIFE.

"Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times."—Psa. cvi. 3.

HE that can look upon death, and see its face with the same countenance with which he hears its story; that can endure all the labours of his life with his soul supporting his body; that can equally despise riches when he hath them and when he hath them not; that never thinks his charity expensive if a worthy person be the receiver; he that does nothing for opinion's sake, but every thing for conscience, being as curious of his thoughts as of his actings in markets and theatres, and is as much in awe of himself as of a whole assembly; he that knows God looks on, and contrives his secret affairs as in the presence of God and His holy angels; that eats and drinks because he needs it, not that he may serve a lust or load his belly; he that is bountiful and cheerful to his friends, and charitable and apt to forgive his enemies; that loves his country, and obeys his prince, and desires and endeavours nothing more than that he may do honour to God—this person may reckon his life to be the life of a man, and compute his months, not by the course of the sun, but by the zodiac and circle of his virtues.

JUNE 7


TURNING TRIALS INTO BLESSINGS.

"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."—Acts xiv. 22.

WHEN any thing happens to our displeasure, let us endeavour to take off its trouble by turning it into spiritual or artificial advantage, and handle it on that side in which it may be useful to the designs of reason; for there is nothing but hath a double handle, or at least we have two hands to apprehend it. When an enemy reproaches us, let us look on him as an impartial relater of our faults, for he will tell thee truer than thy fondest friend will. "The ox, when he is weary, treads surest:" and if there be nothing else in the disgrace, but that it makes us to walk warily, and tread sure for fear of our enemies, that is better than to be flattered into pride and carelessness. This is the charity of Christian philosophy, which expounds the sense of the Divine providence fairly, and reconciles us to it by a charitable construction: and we may as well refuse all physic, if we consider it only as unpleasant in the taste; but so, also, we may be in charity with every unpleasant accident, because, though it taste bitter, it is intended for health and medicine.

CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

"For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Thess. v. 9.


HRIST paid the score of our sins, only that we might be permitted to repent, and that this repentance might be effectual to the great purposes of felicity and salvation.

Consider, that as it cost Christ many millions of prayers and groans and sighs, so He is now at this instant, and hath been for these sixteen hundred years, night and day, incessantly praying for grace to us, that we may repent; and for pardon when we do; and for degrees of pardon beyond the capacities of our infirmities, and the merit of our sorrows and amendment: and this prayer He will continue till His second coming; "for He ever liveth to make intercession for us." And that we may know what it is in behalf of which He intercedes, St. Paul tells us His design; "We are ambassadors for Christ, as though He did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God." And what Christ prays us to do, He prays to God that we may do: that which He desires of us as His servants, He desires of God, who is the fountain of the grace and powers unto us, and without whose assistance we can do nothing.

JUNE 9

FELLOW-SUFFERERS WITH CHRIST.

"An holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."—1 Pet. ii. 5.

HRIST, who began, and lived, and died in sorrows, perceiving His own sufferings to succeed so well, and that "for suffering death, He was crowned with immortality," resolved to take all His disciples and servants to the fellowship of the same suffering, that they might have a participation of His glory; knowing, God hath opened no gate of heaven but "the narrow gate," to which the cross was the key. And since Christ, now being our High Priest in heaven, intercedes for us by representing His passion, and the dolours of the cross, that even in glory He might still preserve the mercies of His past sufferings, for which the Father did so delight in Him; He also designs to present us to God dressed in the same robe, and treated in the same manner, and honoured with "the marks of the Lord Jesus;" "He hath predestinated us to be conformable to the image of His Son." And if under a head crowned with thorns, we bring to God members circled with roses, and softness, and delicacy, triumphant members in the militant church, God will reject us, He will not know us who are so unlike our elder Brother.

CHRIST'S ATONEMENT.

"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood . . . be glory and dominion for ever and ever."—Rev. i. 5, 6.

THUS, O blessed Jesus, Thou didst finish Thy holy passion with pain and anguish so great, that nothing could be greater than it, except Thyself and Thy own infinite mercy: and all this for man, even for me, than whom nothing could be more miserable, Thyself only excepted, who becamest so by undertaking our guilt and our punishment. And now, Lord, who hast done so much for me, be pleased only to make it effectual to me, that it may not be useless and lost as to my particular, lest I become eternally miserable, and lost to all hopes and possibilities of comfort. All this deserves more love than I have to give: but, Lord, do Thou turn me all into love, and all my love into obedience, and let my obedience be without interruption, and then I hope Thou wilt accept such a return as I can make. Make me to be something that Thou delightest in, and Thou shalt have all that I am or have from Thee, even whatsoever Thou makest fit for Thyself. O sweetest Saviour, clothe my soul with Thy holy robe; hide my sins in Thy wounds, and bury them in Thy grave; and let me rise in the life of grace, and abide and grow in it, till I arrive at the kingdom of glory.

JUNE 11

THE PLEASURES OF THIS WORLD.

"He that endureth to the end shall be saved."—

Matt. x. 22.

HE that shrinks from the yoke of Christ, from the burden of the Lord, upon his deathbed will have cause to remember, that by that time all his persecutions would have been past, and that then there would remain nothing for him but rest, and crowns, and sceptres. When Lysimachus, impatient and overcome with thirst, gave up his kingdom to the Getæ, being a captive, and having drank a lusty draught of wine, and his thirst now gone, he fetched a deep sigh, and said, "Miserable man that I am, who for so little pleasure, the pleasure of one draught, lost so great a kingdom!" Such will be their case, who, being impatient of suffering, change their persecution into wealth and an easy fortune: they shall find themselves miserable in the separations of eternity, losing the glories of heaven for so little a pleasure; in which when a man hath entered, he loses the rights and privileges and honours of a good man, and gets nothing that is profitable and useful to holy purposes, or necessary to any.

THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED ENDURES NOT.

"A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."—Psa. xxxvii. 16.

WOULD any man amongst us, looking and considering beforehand, kill his lawful king, to be heir of all? Would any of you choose to have God angry with you upon these terms? Would any of you be a perjured man for it all? A wise man or a good would not choose it. Would any of you die an atheist, that you might live in plenty and power? I believe you tremble to think of it. It cannot therefore be a happiness to thrive upon the stock of a great sin. For if any man should contract with an impure spirit, to give his soul up at a certain day, it may be twenty years hence, upon the condition he might, for twenty years, have his vain desires; should we not think that person infinitely miserable? Every prosperous, thriving sinner is in the same condition: within these twenty years he shall be thrown into the portion of devils, but shall never come out thence in twenty millions of years.

THE FIERY TRIAL.

"That the trial of your faith . . . though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

—I Peter i. 7.

PATIENCE is necessary that we receive the promise, and tribulation does work this; "for a short time it worketh the consummation of our hope; even an exceeding weight of glory;" we have no reason to "think it strange concerning the fiery trial, as if it were a strange thing." It can be no hurt. The church is like Moses' bush; when it is all on fire, it is not at all consumed, but made full of miracle, full of splendour, full of God: and unless we can find something that God cannot turn into joy, we have reason not only to be patient, but rejoice, when we are persecuted in a righteous cause: for love is the soul of Christianity, and suffering is the soul of love. To be innocent, and to be persecuted, are the body and soul of Christianity. "I, John, your brother, and partaker in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus," said St. John: those were the titles and ornaments of his profession: that is, "I, John, your fellow-Christian:" that is the plain song of the former descant.

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE.

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you . . . for My sake."—Matt. v. 11.

INDEED it is so glorious a thing to be like Christ, to be dressed like the prince of the catholic church, who was a man of sufferings, and to whom a prosperous and unafflicted person is very unlike, that in all ages the servants of God have put on "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left:" that is, in the sufferings of persecution, or the labours of mortification; in patience under the rod of God, or by election of our own; by toleration, or self-denial; by actual martyrdom, or by aptness or disposition towards it; by dying for Christ, or suffering for Him; by being willing to part with all when He calls for it, and by parting with what we can for the relief of His poor members. For, know this, there is no state in the church so serene, no days so prosperous, in which God does not give to His servants the powers and opportunities of suffering for Him; not only they that die for Christ, but they that live according to His laws, shall find some lives to part with, and many ways to suffer for Christ.

JUNE 15

FAINT-HEARTED RELIGION.

"They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness.—Psa. lxxxii. 5.

AT first, man lost his innocence only in hope to get a little knowledge: and ever since then, lest knowledge should discover his error, and make him return to innocence, we are content to part with that now, and to know nothing that may discover or discountenance our sins, or discompose our secular designs. And as God made great revelations, and furnished out a wise religion, and sent His Spirit to give the gift of faith to His church, that upon the foundation of faith man might build a holy life; now our hearts love to retire into blindness, and sneak under covert of false principles, and run to a cheap religion, and an inactive discipline, and make a faith of our own, that we may build upon it ease, and ambition, and a tall fortune, and the pleasures of revenge, and do what we have a mind to; scarce once in seven years denying a strong and an unruly appetite upon the interest of a just conscience and holy religion. This is such a desperate method of impiety, so certain arts and apt instruments for the devil, that it does his work entirely, and produces an infallible damnation.

JUNE 16

CHRIST'S LIFE AND DEATH.

"A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."—

Isa. liii. 3.

CHRIST entered into the world with all the circumstances of poverty. He had a star to illustrate his birth ; but a stable for His bed-chamber, and a manger for His cradle. The angels sang hymns when He was born : but He was cold and cried, uneasy and unprovided. He lived long in the trade of a carpenter ; He, by whom God made the world, had, in his first years, the business of a mean and ignoble trade. He did good wherever He went ; and almost wherever He went was abused. He deserved heaven for His obedience, but found a cross in His way thither : and if ever any man had reason to expect fair usages from God, and to be dandled in the lap of ease, softness, and a prosperous fortune, He it was only that could deserve that, or any thing that can be good. But, after He had chosen to live a life of virtue, of poverty, and labour, He entered into a state of death ; whose shame and trouble were great enough to pay for the sins of the whole world. And I shall choose to express this mystery in the words of Scripture. He died not by a single or a sudden death, but He was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

JUNE 17

FALSE HUMILITY.

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."—Jer. xvii. 9.

WE inquire after our faults and failings, only to be told we have none, but did excellently; and then we are pleased: we rail upon our actions, only to be chidden for so doing; and then he is our friend who chides us into a good opinion of ourselves, which however all the world cannot make us part with. Nay, humility itself makes us proud; so false, so base is the heart of man. For humility is so noble a virtue, that even pride itself puts on its upper garment: and we do like those who cannot endure to look upon an ugly or a deformed person, and yet will give a great price for a picture extremely like him. Humility is despised in substance, but courted and admired in effigy. And Æsop's picture was sold for two talents, when himself was made a slave at the price of two philippi. And because humility makes a man to be honoured, therefore we imitate all its garbs and postures, its civilities and silence, its modesties and condescensions.

EXALTATION OF THE SPIRIT NOT TO BE TRUSTED.

"We should not trust in ourselves."—2 Cor. i. 9.

THEOCRITUS tells of a fisherman that dreamed he had taken "a fish of gold;" upon which, being overjoyed, he made a vow that he would never fish more: but when he waked, he soon declared his vow to be null, because he found his golden fish was escaping away through the holes of his eyes, when he first opened them. Just so we do in the purposes of religion; sometimes, in a good mood, we seem to see heaven opened, and all the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem paved with gold and precious stones, and we are ravished with spiritual apprehensions, and resolve never to return to the low affections of the world, and the impure adherences of sin: but when this flash of lightning is gone, and we converse again with the inclinations and habitual desires of our false hearts, those other desires and fine considerations disband, and the resolutions, taken in that pious fit, melt into indifference and cold customs.

JUNE 19

SUFFERINGS OF JESUS

"Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings."—1 Peter iv. 13.

JESUS was like the rainbow, which God set in the clouds as a sacrament to confirm a promise and establish a grace; He was half made of the glories of the light, and half of the moisture of a cloud; in His best days He was but half triumph and half sorrow: He was sent to tell of His Father's mercies, and that God intended to spare us; but appeared not but in the company or in the retinue of a shower, and of foul weather. But I need not tell that Jesus, beloved of God, was a suffering person; that which concerns this question most, is, that He made for us a covenant of sufferings: His doctrines were such as expressly and by consequent enjoin and support sufferings, and a state of affliction; His very promises were sufferings; His beatitudes were sufferings; His rewards, and His arguments to invite men to follow Him, were only taken from sufferings in this life, and the reward of sufferings hereafter.

SAD EXPERIENCE.

"They have chosen their own ways."—Isa. lxvi. 3.

A MAN'S heart at first is like a plain table; unspotted, indeed, but then there is nothing legible in it. As soon as ever we ripen towards the imperfect uses of our reason, we write upon this table such crooked characters, such imperfect configurations, so many fooleries, and stain it with so many blots, that there is nothing worth the reading in our hearts for a great while. And when education and ripeness, reason and experience, Christian philosophy and the grace of God, have made fair impressions, and written the law in our hearts with the finger of God's Holy Spirit, we blot out this handwriting of God's ordinances, or mingle it with false principles and interlinings of our own; we disorder the method of God, or deface the truth of God; either we make the rule uneven, we bribe or abuse our guide, that we may wander with an excuse; or if nothing else will do it, we turn head and profess to go against the laws of God.

GODLY LIVES.

"To be spiritually minded is life and peace."—
Rom. viii. 6.

WHAT would you do, if God should command you to kill your eldest son, or to work in the mines for a thousand years together, or to fast all your lifetime with bread and water? were not heaven a very great bargain even after all this? And when God requires nothing of us but to live soberly, justly, and godly (which things themselves are to a man a very great felicity, and necessary to our present well-being), shall we think this to be an intolerable burden, and that heaven is too little a purchase at that price; and that God, in mere justice, will take a deathbed sigh or groan, and a few unprofitable tears and promises, in exchange for all our duty?

If these motives, joined together with our own interest (even as much as felicity, and the sight of God, and the avoiding the intolerable pains of hell, and many intermedial judgments, come to), will not move us to leave, 1. the filthiness, and, 2. the trouble, and, 3. the uneasiness, and, 4. the unreasonableness of sin, and turn to God—there is no more to be said; we must perish in our folly.

THE DEVIL'S POWER LIMITED.

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."—

James iv. 7.

THE devil can but tempt, and offer a dagger at the heart; unless our hands thrust it home, the devil can do nothing but what may turn to our advantage. And in this sense we are to understand the two seeming contradictories in Scripture: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation," said our blessed Saviour; and, "Count it all joy when you enter into divers temptations," said one of Christ's disciples. The case is easy. When God suffers us to be tempted, He means it but as a trial of our faith, as the exercise of our virtues, as the opportunity of reward; and in such cases we have reason to count it all joy; since the "trial of our faith worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience causeth hope, and hope maketh not ashamed:" but yet, for all this, pray against temptations: for when we get them into our hands, we use them as blind men do their clubs, neither distinguish person nor part; they strike the face of their friends as soon as the back of the enemy.

JUNE 23


DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

"Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."—
Matt. vii. 21.

DEFER not at all to repent; much less mayest thou put it off to thy death-bed. We find work enough to mortify one beloved lust, in our very best advantage of strength and time, and before it is so deeply rooted as it must needs be supposed to be at the end of a wicked life: and, therefore, it will prove impossible, when the work is so great and the strength so little, when sin is so strong and grace so weak: for they always keep the same proportion of increase and decrease, and as sin grows grace decays: so that the more need we have of grace, the less at that time we shall have. To which add this consideration: that on a man's death-bed the day of repentance is past; for repentance being the renewing of a holy life, a living the life of grace, it is a contradiction to say that a man can live a holy life upon his death-bed; especially if we consider, that for a sinner to live a holy life must first suppose him to have overcome all his evil habits, and then to have made a purchase of the contrary graces, by the labours of great prudence, watchfulness, self-denial, and severity. "Nothing that is excellent can be wrought suddenly."

FALSE CONTRITION.


"If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word."—Num. xxx. 2.

 PICTETUS tells us of a gentleman returning from banishment, who, in his journey towards home, called at his house, told a sad story of an imprudent life, the greatest part of which being now spent, he was resolved for the future to live philosophically, and entertain no business, to be candidate for no employment, not to go to the court, nor to salute Cæsar with ambitious attendances, but to study, and worship the gods, and die willingly, when nature or necessity called him. It may be this man believed himself, but Epictetus did not. And he had reason: for "letters from Cæsar met him" at the doors, and invited him to court; and he forgot all his promises, which were warm upon his lips; and grew pompous, secular, and ambitious, and gave the gods thanks for his preferment. Thus many men leave the world, when their fortune hath left them; and they are severe and philosophical, and retired for ever, if for ever it be impossible to return: but let a prosperous sunshine warm and refresh their sadnesses, and make it but possible to break their purposes, and there needs no more temptation.

JUNE 25

GOD'S GLORY.

"With Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light."—Psa. xxxvi. 9.

OD is the eternal fountain of honour and the spring of glory; in Him it dwells essentially, from Him it derives originally; and when an action is glorious, or a man is honourable, it is because the action is pleasing to God, in the relation of obedience or imitation, and because the man is honoured by God, and by God's vicegerent: and therefore, God cannot be dishonoured, because all honour comes from Himself; He cannot but be glorified, because to be Himself is to be infinitely glorious. And yet He is pleased to say, that our sins dishonour Him, and our obedience does glorify Him. But as the sun, the great eye of the world, prying into the recesses of rocks and the hollowness of valleys, receives visible forms from these objects, but he beholds them only by that light which proceeds from himself: so does God, who is the light of that eye; He receives reflexes and returns from us, and these He calls "glorifications" of Himself, but they are such which are made so by His own gracious acceptance.

DECEITFULNESS OF THE
HEART'S STRENGTH.

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."—

Prov. xxviii. 26.

THE heart is deceitful in its strength ; and when we have the growth of a man, we have the weaknesses of a child : nay, more yet—and it is a sad consideration—the more we are in age, the weaker in our courage. It appears in the heats and forwardnesses of new converts, which are like to the great emissions of lightning, or like huge fires, which flame and burn without measure, even all that they can ; till from flames they descend to still fires, from thence to smoke, from smoke to embers, and from thence to ashes ; cold and pale, like ghosts, or the fantastic images of death. And the primitive church were zealous in their religion up to the degree of cherubims, and would run as greedily to the sword or the hangman, to die for the cause of God, as we do now to the greatest joy and entertainment of a Christian spirit,—even to the receiving of the holy sacrament.

JUNE 27

THE HOLINESS OF CHRIST.

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."—Matt. xvii. 5.

HOWEVER the person of Jesus Christ was depressed with a load of humble accidents, and shadowed with the darknesses of poverty and sad contingencies, so that the Jews, and the contemporary ages of the Gentiles, and the apostles themselves, could not at first discern the brightest essence of divinity; yet as a beauty, artificially covered with a thin cloud of Cyprus, transmits its excellency to the eye, made more greedy and apprehensive by that imperfect and weak restraint; so was the sanctity and holiness of the life of Jesus glorious in its darknesses, and found confessors and admirers even in the midst of those despites which were done Him upon the contrariant designs of malice and contradictory ambition. Thus the wife of Pilate called Him "that just person;" Pilate pronounced Him "guiltless;" Judas said He was "innocent;" the devil himself called Him "the Holy One of God." They could not deny but that He was a man of God, of exemplar sanctity, of an angelical chastity, of a life sweet, affable, and complying with human conversation, and as obedient to government as the most humble children of the kingdom. And yet He was Lord of all the world.

THE CANKER IN OUR
CHARITY

"When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee."—Matt. vi. 2.

THE heart is false, deceiving and deceived, in its intentions and designs. A man hears the precepts of God enjoining us to give alms of all we possess; he readily obeys with much cheerfulness and alacrity, and his charity, like a fair-spreading tree, looks beautifully: but there is a canker at the heart; the man blows a trumpet to call the poor together, and hopes the neighbourhood will take notice of his bounty. Nay, he gives alms privately, and charges no man to speak of it, and yet hopes by some accident or other to be praised both for his charity and humility. And if, by chance, the fame of his alms come abroad, it is but his duty to "let his light so shine before men," that God may be "glorified," and some of our neighbours be relieved, and others edified. But then, to distinguish the intention of our heart in this instance, and to seek God's glory in a particular—which will also conduce much to our reputation, and to have no filthy adherence to stick to the heart, no reflection upon ourselves, or no complacency and delight in popular noises—is the nicety of abstraction, and requires no angel to do it.

JUNE 29

SIN MOST EASILY ABJURED AT ONCE.


"Those that seek Me early shall find Me."—

Prov. viii. 17.

HE that resolves to sin upon a resolution to repent, by every act of sin makes himself more incapable of repenting, by growing more in love with sin, by remembering its pleasures, by serving it once more, and losing one degree more of the liberty of our spirit. And if you resolve to sin now, because it is pleasant, how do you know that your appetite will alter? Will it not appear pleasant to you next week, and the next week after that, and so for ever? And still you sin, and still you will repent; that is, you will repent when the sin can please you no longer; for so long as it can please you, so long you are tempted not to repent, as well as now to act the sin: and the longer you lie in it, the more you will love it. So that it is in effect to say, I love my sin now, but I will hereafter hate it; only I will act it a while longer, and grow more in love with it, and then I will repent; that is, then I will be sure to hate it, when I shall most love it.

SECRET HOLINESS.

"Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly."—Matt. vi. 4.

ENECA said concerning wise men, that "he that doth benefits to others, hides those benefits ; as a man lays up great treasures in the earth, which he must never see with his eyes, unless a great occasion forces him to dig the graves, and produce that which he buried ; but all the while the man was hugely rich, and he had the wealth of a great relation." So it is with God and us : for this huge benefit of the Spirit, which God gives us, is for our good deposited into our souls ; not made for forms and ostentation, not to be looked upon, or serve little ends ; but growing in the secret of our souls, and swelling up to a treasure, making us in this world rich by title and relation ; but it shall be produced in the great necessities of doomsday. In the meantime, if the fire be quenched, the fire of God's Spirit, God will kindle another in His anger that shall never be quenched. But if we entertain God's Spirit with our own purities, and employ it diligently, and serve it willingly (for God's Spirit is a loving Spirit), then we shall really be turned into spirits.

JULY 1

THE VALUE OF REPROOF.

"He that heareth reproof getteth understanding."—

Prov. xv. 32.

HE is a miserable man, whom none dares tell of his faults so plainly, that he may understand his danger; and he that is incapable and impatient of reproof, can never become a good friend to any man. For, besides that himself would never admonish his friend when he sins, (and if he would, why should not himself be glad of the same charity?) he is also "proud, and scorner in his name;" he thinks himself exempt from the condition and failings of men; or, if he does not, he had rather go to hell than be called to his way by an angry sermon, or driven back by the sword of an angel, or endure one blushing, for all his hopes and interests of heaven. It is no shame to be reproved, but to deserve it; but he that deserves it, and will do so still, shall increase his shame into confusion, and bring upon himself a sorrow bigger than the calamities of war, and plagues, and hospitals, and poverty.

SECRET LOVE OF SIN.

"Cleanse Thou me from secret faults."—Psa. xix. 2.

WE curse our sins, and yet long for them extremely; we renounce them publicly, and yet send for them in private, and show them kindness. We leave little offences, but our faith and our charity are not strong enough to master great ones; and sometimes we are shamed out of great ones, but yet entertain little ones. Or if we disclaim both, yet we love to remember them, and delight in their past actions, and bring them home to us, at least by fiction of imagination, and we love to be betrayed into them. We would fain have things so ordered, by chance or power, that it may seem necessary to sin, or that it may become excusable, and dressed fitly for our own circumstances; and for ever we long after the flesh-pots of Egypt, the garlic and the onions; and we do so little esteem manna, the food of angels, we so loathe the bread of heaven, that any temptation will make us return to our fetters and our bondage.

JULY 8

GOD'S JEALOUSY.

"The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."—Deut. iv. 24.

DO the sun or the stars preserve us alive? or do we get understanding from the angels? Did ever any joint of our body knit, or our heart ever keep one true minute of a pulse, without God? Had we not been either nothing, or worse, that is, infinitely, eternally miserable, but that God made us capable, and then pursued us with arts and devices of great mercy to force us to be happy? Great reason therefore there is, that God should be jealous lest we take any of our duty from Him, who hath so strangely deserved it all, and give it to a creature, or to our enemy, who cannot be capable of any. But, however, it will concern us with much caution to observe our own ways, since "we are made a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men." God hath set so many spies upon us, the blessed angels and the accursed devils, good men and bad men, the eye of heaven, and eye of that eye, God Himself,—all watching lest we rob God of His honour, and ourselves of our hopes.

THE EFFECT OF THE SPIRIT.

"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."—Rom. viii. 14.

IF it were given to any of us to see paradise, or the third heaven (as it was to St. Paul), could it be that ever we should love any thing but Christ, or follow any guide but the Spirit, or desire any thing but heaven, or understand any thing to be pleasant but what shall lead thither? Now what a vision can do, that the Spirit doth certainly to them that entertain Him. They that have Him really, and not in pretence only, are certainly great despisers of the things of the world. The Spirit doth not create or enlarge our appetites of things below: spiritual men are not designed to reign upon earth, but to reign over their lusts and sottish appetites. The Spirit doth not inflame our thirst of wealth, but extinguishes it, and makes us to "esteem all things as loss, and as dung, so that we may gain Christ." No gain then is pleasant but godliness, no ambition but longings after heaven, no revenge but against ourselves for sinning; nothing but God and Christ. As the king of Sodom said to Abraham: "Secure but the souls to us, and take our goods."

JULY. 5

DUTIES OF CONSOLATION.

"Visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."—
James i. 27.

HAVE seen the sun kiss the frozen earth, which was bound up with the images of death, and the colder breath of the north ; and then the waters break from their enclosures, and melt with joy, and run in useful channels ; and the flies do rise again from their little graves in walls, and dance awhile in the air, to tell that there is joy within, and that the great mother of creatures will open the stock of her new refreshment, become useful to mankind, and sing praises to her Redeemer. So is the heart of a sorrowful man under the discourses of a wise comforter ; he breaks from the despairs of the grave, and the fetters and chains of sorrow ; he blesses God, and he blesses thee, and he feels his life returning : for to be miserable is death, but nothing is life but to be comforted ; and God is pleased with no music from below so much as in the thanksgiving-songs of relieved widows, of supported orphans, of rejoicing, and comforted, and thankful persons.

JULY 8

THE HOPE OF LIFE ETERNAL.


"This is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life."—1 John ii. 25.

THE hope of life eternal can never fail us, and the joy of that is great enough to make us suffer any thing, or to do any thing. To death, to bands, to poverty, to banishment, to tribunals, any whither in hope of life eternal ; as long as this anchor holds, we may suffer a storm, but cannot suffer shipwreck. And I desire you, by the way, to observe how good a God we serve, and how excellent a religion Christ taught, when one of His great precepts is, that we should "rejoice and be exceeding glad." And God hath given us the spirit of rejoicing, not a sullen melancholy spirit, not the spirit of bondage or of a slave, but the Spirit of His Son, consigning us by a holy conscience to "joys unspeakable and full of glory." And from hence you may also infer, that those who sink under a persecution, or are impatient in a sad accident, they put out their own fires which the Spirit of the Lord hath kindled, and lose those glories which stand behind the cloud.

JULY 7

THE NEW MAN.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."—
2 Cor. v. 17.

 T. Jerome tells of the custom of the empire ; when a tyrant was overcome, they used to break the head of his statues, and upon the same trunk to set the head of the conqueror, and so it passed wholly for the new prince. So it is in the kingdom of grace. As soon as the tyrant sin is overcome, and a new heart is put into us, or that we serve under a new head, instantly we have a new name given us, and we are esteemed a new creation ; and not only changed in manners, but we have a new nature within us, even a third part of an essential constitution. This may seem strange ; and indeed it is so : and it is one of the great mysteriousnesses of the gospel. Every man naturally consists of soul and body ; but every Christian man that belongs to Christ hath more : for he hath body, and soul, and spirit.

SPIRITUAL LONGINGS.

"My soul longeth . . . for the courts of the Lord."—
Psa. lxxxiv. 2.

ALL they who have God's Spirit, love to feast at the supper of the Lamb, and have no appetites but what are of the Spirit, or servants to the Spirit. I have read of a spiritual person who saw heaven but in a dream, but such as made great impression upon him, and was represented with vigorous and pertinacious phantasms, not easily disbanding; and when he awaked he knew not his cell, nor could tell how night and day were distinguished, nor could discern oil from wine; but called out for his vision again: "Give me my fields again, my most delicious fields, my pillar of a glorious light, my companion St. Jerome, my assistant angels." And this lasted till he was told of his duty, and matter of obedience, and the fear of a sin had disencharmed him, and caused him to take care, lest he lose the substance out of greediness to possess the shadow.

JULY 9

IDLE WORDS.

"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."—
Matt. xii. 36.

WE are as sure to account for every considerable portion of our time as for every sum of money we receive ; and in this it was that St. Bernard gave caution : "Let no man think it a light matter, that he spend his precious time in idle words ;" let no man be so weary of what flies away too fast, and cannot be recalled, as to use arts and devices to pass the time away in vanity, which might be rarely spent in the interests of eternity. Time is given us to repent in, to appease the Divine anger, to prepare for and hasten to the society of angels, to stir up our slackened wills and enkindle our cold devotions, to weep for our daily iniquities, and to sigh after, and work for, the restitution of our lost inheritance. And the reward is very inconsiderable, that exchanges all this for the pleasure of a voluble tongue. And indeed this is an evil, that cannot be avoided by any excuse that can be made for words that are in any sense idle, though in all senses of their own nature and proper relations they be innocent.

JULY 10

THE WAGES OF SIN.

"The Lord shall reward the doer of evil."—

2 Sam. iii. 39.

IF we remember how ambitious we are for fame and reputation, for honour and a fair opinion, for a good name all our days, and when our days are done; and that no ingenious man can enjoy any thing he hath, if he lives in disgrace; and that nothing so breaks a man's spirit as dishonour, and the meanest person alive does not think himself fit to be despised; we are to consider into what an evil condition sin puts us, for which we are not only disgraced and disparaged here, marked with disgraceful punishments, despised by good men, our follies derided, our company avoided, and hooted at by boys, talked of in fairs and markets, pointed at and described by appellatives of scorn, and every body can chide us, and we die unpitied, and lie in our graves eaten up by worms, and a foul dishonour; but after all this, at the day of judgment, we shall be called from our charnel-houses, where our disgrace could not sleep, and shall, in the face of God, in the presence of angels and devils, before all good men and all the evil, see and feel the shame of all our sins written upon our foreheads.

BLESSINGS OF SPEECH.

"A wholesome tongue is a tree of life."—Prov. xv. 4.

BY the use of the tongue, God hath distinguished us from beasts, and by the well or ill using it, we are distinguished from one another; and therefore, though silence be innocent as death, harmless as a rose's breath to a distant passenger, yet it is rather the state of death than life. When the Egyptians sacrificed to Harpocrates, their god of silence, in the midst of their rites they cried out, "The tongue is an angel," good or bad, that is as it happens; silence was to them a god, but the tongue is greater; it is the band of human intercourse, and makes men apt to unite in societies and republics. For by voices and homilies, by questions and answers, by narratives and invectives, by counsel and reproof, by praises and hymns, by prayers and glorifications, we serve God's glory and the necessities of men; and by the tongue our tables are made to differ from mangers, our cities from deserts, our churches from herds of beasts and flocks of sheep.

FOLLY OF ATHEISM.

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."—

Psa. xiv. 1.

WHO in the world is a verier fool, a more ignorant, wretched person, than he that is an atheist? A man may better believe there is no such man as himself, and that he is not in being, than that there is no God: for himself can cease to be, and once was not, and shall be changed from what he is, and in very many periods of his life knows not that he is; and so it is every night with him when he sleeps: but none of these can happen to God; and if he knows it not, he is a fool. Can any thing in this world be more foolish than to think that all this rare fabric of heaven and earth can come by chance, when all the skill of art is not able to make an oyster? To see rare effects and no cause; an excellent government and no prince; a motion without an immovable; a circle without a centre; a time without eternity; a second without a first; a thing that begins not from itself, and therefore not to perceive there is something from whence it does begin, which must be without beginning!

JULY 18

THE END OF SIN.

"He that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death."—

Prov. xi. 19.

SIN keeps a good house and is full of company and servants, it is served by the possessions of the world, it is courted by the unhappy, flattered by fools, taken into the bosom by the effeminate, made the end of human designs, and feasted all the way of its progress: wars are made for its interest, and men give or venture their lives that their sin may be prosperous. All the outward senses are its handmaids, and the inward senses are of its privy chamber; the understanding is its counsellor, the will its friend, riches are its ministers, nature holds up its train, and art is its emissary to promote its interest and affairs abroad. And, upon this account, all the world is enrolled in its taxing-tables, and are subjects or friends of its kingdom, or are so kind to it as to make too often visits, and to lodge in its borders; because all men stare upon its pleasures, and are enticed to taste of its wanton delicacies. But then, if we look what are the children of this splendid family, and see what issue sin produces, it may help to untie the charm.

WEAK RESOLVES.

"Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."—Eccl. v. 5.

WE resolve against sin when the opportunity is slipped, and lay it aside as long as the temptation please, even till it come again, and no longer. How many men are there in the world that against every communion renew their vows of holy living? men that for twenty, for thirty years together, have been perpetually resolving against what they daily act; and sure enough they did believe themselves. And yet if a man had daily promised us a courtesy, and failed us but ten times, when it was in his power to have done it, we should think we had reason never to believe him more. And can we then reasonably believe the resolutions of our hearts, which they have falsified so many hundred times? We resolve at a religious time, because then it is the custom of men, and the guise of the religion: or we resolve when we are in a great danger; and then we promise any thing, possible or impossible, likely or unlikely, all is one to us; we only care to remove the present pressure.

JULY 18

ALL THINGS BELONG TO THE CHRISTIAN.

"Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."—Matt. vi. 32.

IF we go into the fields, we find them tilled by the mercies of heaven, and watered with showers from God to feed us, and to clothe us. If we go down into the deep, there God hath multiplied our stores, and filled a magazine which no hunger can exhaust. The air drops down delicacies, and the wilderness can sustain us, and all that is in nature, that which feeds lions, and that which the ox eats, that which the fishes live upon, and that which is the provision for the birds, all that can keep us alive. And if we consider that of the beasts and birds, for whom nature hath provided but one dish, it may be flesh or fish, or herbs or flies, and these also we secure with guards from them, and drive away birds and beasts from that provision which nature made for them, yet seldom can we find that any of these perish with hunger; much rather shall we find that we are secured by the securities proper for the more noble creatures by that Providence that disposes all things, by that mercy that gives us all things, which to other creatures are ministered singly.

FOLLOWING IN CHRIST'S FOOTSTEPS.

"He said, . . . Follow Me."—Luke ix. 59.

IT is reported that St. Wenceslaus, one winter night going to his devotions, in a remote church, barefooted in the snow and sharpness of unequal and pointed ice, his servant Podavivus, who waited upon his master's piety, and endeavoured to imitate his affections, began to faint through the violence of the snow and cold, till the king commanded him to follow him, and set his feet in the same footsteps, which his feet should mark for him. The servant did so, and either fancied a cure, or found one ; for he followed his prince, helped forward with shame and zeal to his imitation, and by the forming footsteps for him in the snow. In the same manner does the blessed Jesus ; for, since our way is troublesome, obscure, full of objection and danger, apt to be mistaken and to affright our industry, He commands us to mark His footsteps, to tread where His feet have stood, and not only invites us forward by the argument of His example, but He hath trodden down much of the difficulty, and made the way easier, and fit for our feet.

JULY 17

THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SAINTS.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."—Psa. cxvi. 15.

THE sufferings of the saints are the sum of Christian philosophy. They are sent to wean us from the vanities and affections of this world, and to create in us strong desires of heaven ; whiles God causes us to be here treated rudely, that we may long to be in our country, where God shall be our portion, and angels our companions, and Christ our perpetual feast, and never-ceasing joy shall be our conditions and entertainment. "O death, how bitter art thou to a man that is at ease and rest in his possessions !" But he that is uneasy in his body, and unquiet in his possessions, vexed in his person, discomposed in his designs, who finds no pleasure, no rest here, will be glad to fix his heart where only he shall have what he can desire, and what can make him happy. As long as the waters of persecutions are upon the earth, so long we dwell in the ark : but when the land is dry, the dove itself will be tempted to a wandering course of life, and never to return to the house of her safety.

FAITH AND HOPE.

“ Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul.”—

Heb. vi. 19.

NOW that faith never rides single, but it carries hope before it. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for.” No scripture doth better contain them both in a little than Titus: the apostle says, first, that “the faith of God’s elect acknowledgeth the truth:” secondly, that “it is according to godliness:” thirdly, “it is in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.” When you see a weight of iron, tied to a line, wound upon a wheel from the ground to the top of a house, remember it is like the heart of a sinner, leaden and heavy, lying upon the ground, and wound up in this text, with the line of hope, to the top of heaven. Heaven then is the express and fair object of hope, and God, in His promise, is the procurer. “Promise,” I say: for we do not grope for heaven blindfold: but our assurance is incomparably the best that can be given, and in the best manner; “a promise made before the world began.”

JULY 19

SPECIAL SEASONS OF PRAYER.

"He went up into a mountain apart to pray, . . . and was there alone."—Matt. xiv. 23.

ALL that have a care to walk with God, fill their vessels more largely as soon as they rise, before they begin the work of the day, and before they lie down again at night : which is to observe what the Lord appointed in the Levitical ministry, a morning and an evening lamb to be laid upon the altar. So with them that are not stark irreligious, prayer is the key to open the day, and the bolt to shut in the night. But as the skies drop the early dew and the evening dew upon the grass,—yet it would not spring and grow green by that constant and double falling of the dew, unless some great showers, at certain seasons, did supply the rest ; so the customary devotion of prayer, twice a-day, is the falling of the early and the latter dew ; but if you will increase and flourish in the works of grace, empty the great clouds sometimes, and let them fall into a full shower of prayer : choose out the seasons in your own discretion, when prayer shall overflow, like Jordan in the time of harvest.

JULY 20

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy."—
Luke ii. 10.

AS light, when it first begins to gild the east, scatters indeed the darknesses from the earth, but ceases not to increase its flame till it hath made perfect day ; so it happened now, in this apparition of the angel of light. He appeared and told his message, and did shine, but the light arose higher and higher, till midnight was as bright as mid-day. For "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host ;" and after the angel had told his message in plain song, the whole chorus joined in descant, and sang an hymn to the tune and sense of heaven, where glory is paid to God in eternal and never-ceasing offices, and whence good-will descends upon men in perpetual and never-stopping torrents. Their song was, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men : " by this song not only referring to the strange peace, which at that time put all the world in ease ; but to the great peace, which this new-born Prince should make between His Father and all mankind.

JULY 21

THE BLESSED POVERTY OF JESUS.


"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."—Matt. viii. 20.

JESUS was pleased to be born of a poor mother, in a poor place, in a cold winter's night, far from home, amongst strangers, with all the circumstances of humility and poverty. And no man will have cause to complain of his coarse robe, if he remembers the swaddling-clothes of this holy Child; nor to be disquieted at his hard bed, when he considers Jesus laid in a manger; nor to be discontented at his thin table, when he calls to mind the King of heaven and earth was fed with a little breast-milk. But since the eternal wisdom of the Father, who "knew to choose the good and refuse the evil," did choose a life of poverty, it gives us demonstration that riches and honours, those idols of the world's esteem, are so far from creating true felicities, that they are not of themselves among the number of good things. However, no man is to be ashamed of innocent poverty, of which many wise men make vows, and of which the holy Jesus-made election, and His apostles after Him made public profession.

SIMPLICITY OF HEART.

"I fear, lest by any means . . . your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."—

2 Cor. xi. 3.

IMPLICITY is the companion of goodness and a noble mind ; the preserver of friendship, the band of society, the security of merchants, and the blessing of trade ; it prevents infinity of quarrels and appeals to judges, and suffers none of the evils of jealousy. Men, by simplicity, converse as do the angels ; they do their own work, and secure their proper interest, and serve the public, and do glory to God. But hypocrites, and liars, and dissemblers spread darkness over the face of affairs, and make men like the blind, to walk softly and timorously ; and crafty men, like the close air, suck that which is open, and devour its portion, and destroy its liberty ; and it is the guise of devils, and the dishonour of the soul, and the canker of society, and the enemy of justice, and truth, and peace, of wealth and honour, of courage and merchandise. He is a good man with whom a blind man may safely converse : to whom, in respect of his fair treatings, the darkness and light are both alike ; but he that bears light upon the face with a dark heart, is like him that transforms himself into an angel of light when he means to do most mischief.

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE AN EXAMPLE FOR EVERY DAY.

"As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."—John xvii. 18.

IF we observe our blessed Saviour in the whole story of His life, although He was without sin, yet the instances of His piety were the actions of a very holy, but of an ordinary life. And we may observe this difference in the story of Jesus from ecclesiastical writings of certain beatified persons, whose life is told rather to amaze us, and to create scruples, than to lead us in the evenness and serenity of a holy conscience. Such are the prodigious penances of Simeon Stylites, the abstinence of the religious retired into the mountain Nitria, but especially the stories of later saints, in the midst of a declining piety and aged Christendom, where persons are represented holy by way of idea and fancy, if not to promote the interests of a family and institution. But our blessed Saviour, though His eternal union and adherencies of love and obedience to His heavenly Father were next to infinite, yet in His external actions, in which only, with the correspondence of the Spirit in those actions, he propounds Himself imitable, he did so converse with men, that men, after that example, might for ever converse with him.

CHRIST'S JOY AT OUR
REPENTANCE.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross."—Heb. xii. 2.

WHAT ever we should repent, was so costly a purchase, and so great a concernment, and so high a favour, and the event is esteemed by God Himself so great an excellency, that our blessed Saviour tells us, "there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth;" meaning, that when Christ shall be glorified, and at the right hand of His Father make intercession for us, praying for our repentance, the conversion and repentance of every sinner is part of Christ's glorification, it is the answering of His prayers, it is a portion of His reward, in which He does essentially glory by the joys of His glorified humanity. This is the joy of our Lord Himself directly, not of the angels, save only by reflection. The joy (said our blessed Saviour) shall be in the presence of the angels; they shall see the glory of the Lord, the answering of His prayers, the satisfaction of His desires, and the reward of His sufferings, in the repentance and consequent pardon of a sinner. For therefore He once suffered, and for that reason He rejoices for ever.

JULY 25


THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth."—John iii. 8.

WHAT can you make up so close that the wind will not get into it? Yet you see it not, you know not whence it comes, it is an invisible messenger: "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." Breath is an imperceptible expiration; therefore, Christ breathed on His apostles, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Some gales of western winds, in the spring, make the earth glad with their gentle blast, and open the buds and flowers: so there is a breath of omnipotent virtue, which fans the heart that was hot in sin with its coolness, which carries away the caterpillars that eat up the tender leaf of our first greenness: which widens our blossoms to make their expectation show itself openly: which perfumes the evil scents of scandals that annoy us, as it is expressed to that intent in the mystical song: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

SELF-EXAMINATION.

"Let every man prove his own work."—Gal. vi. 4.

OD hath put it into our power, by a timely accusation of ourselves in the tribunal of the court Christian, to prevent all the arts of aggravation which, at doomsday, shall load foolish and undiscerning souls. He that accuses himself of his crimes here, means to forsake them, and looks upon them on all sides, and spies out his deformity, and is taught to hate them. He is instructed and prayed for, he prevents the anger of God, and defeats the devil's malice ; and, by making shame the instrument of repentance, he takes away the sting, and makes that to be his medicine which otherwise would be his death. And concerning this exercise, I shall only add what the patriarch of Alexandria told an old religious person in his hermitage. Having asked him what he found in that desert, he was answered only this—"To judge and condemn myself perpetually, that is the employment of my solitude."—The patriarch answered, "There is no other way."

JULY 27

SURRENDER OF THE WILL TO GOD.

*"Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the
Father of spirits, and live?"—Heb. xii. 9.*

NOTHING can distinguish man from man, in order to beatitude, but choice and election; and nothing can ennoble the choice but love, and nothing can exercise love but difficulty, and nothing can make that difficulty but the contradiction of our appetite, and the crossing of our natural affections. And, therefore, whenever any of you are tempted violently, or grow weary in your spirits with resisting the petulancy of temptation, you may be cured, if you will please but to remember and rejoice, that now you have something of your own to give to God, something that He will be pleased to accept, something that He hath given you that you may give it to Him. For our money and our time, our days of feasting and our days of sorrow, our discourse and our acts of praise, our prayers and our songs, our vows and our offerings, our worshippings and protestations, and whatsoever else can be accounted in the sum of our religion, are only accepted according as they bear along with them portions of our will, and choice of love, and appendant difficulty.

JULY 28

CONSIDERATION OF GOD'S MERCIES.

"Bless the Lord . . . who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."—Psa. ciii. 2, 4.

FOR him that considers God's mercies, and dwells awhile in that depth, it is hard not to talk widely, and without art and order of discoursings. St. Peter talked he knew not what, when he entered into a cloud with Jesus upon Mount Tabor, though it passed over him like the little curtains that ride upon the north wind, and pass between the sun and us. And when we converse with a light greater than the sun, and taste a sweetness more delicious than the dew of heaven, and in our thoughts entertain the ravishments and harmony of that atonement which reconciles God to man and man to felicity,—it will be more easily pardoned, if we should be like persons that admire much, and say but little. And indeed we can best confess the glories of the Lord by dazzled eyes, and a stammering tongue, and a heart overcharged with the miracles of this infinity. For so those little drops that run over, though they be not much in themselves, yet they tell that the vessel was full, and could express the greatness of the shower no otherwise but by spilling.

JULY 29

ZEAL SHOULD BE TEMPERED.

"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God."—Eccl. v. 2.

BET zeal never transport us to attempt any thing but what is possible. S. Teresa made a vow that she would do always that which was absolutely the best. But neither could her understanding always tell her which was so, nor her will always have the same servours; and it must often breed scruples, and sometimes tediousness, and wishes that the vow were unmade. He that vows never to have an ill thought, never to commit an error, hath taken a course that his little infirmities shall become crimes, and certainly be imputed by changing his unavoidable infirmity into vow-breach. Zeal is a violence to a man's spirit; and unless the spirit be secured by the proper nature of the duty, and the circumstances of the action, and the possibilities of the man, it is like a great fortune in the meanest person, it bears him beyond his limit, and breaks him into dangers and passions, transportations and all the furies of disorder that can happen.

CHRIST'S PROMISES.

"My kingdom is not of this world."—John xviii. 36.

WHEN our blessed Saviour told His disciples that they should "sit upon twelve thrones," they presently thought they had His bond for a kingdom, and dreamed of wealth and honour, power and a splendid court; and Christ knew they did, but did not disentangle His promise from the enfolded and intricate sense of which His words were naturally capable. But He performed His promise to better purposes than they hoped for. They were presidents in the conduct of souls, princes of God's people, the chief in sufferings, stood nearest to the cross, had an elder brother's portion in the kingdom of grace, were the founders of churches, and dispensers of the mysteries of the kingdom, and ministers of the Spirit of God, and channels of mighty blessings, under-mediators in the priesthood of their Lord, and "their names were written in heaven:" and this was infinitely better than to groan and wake under a head pressed with a golden crown and pungent cares, and to eat alone, and to walk in a crowd, and to be vexed with all the public and many of the private evils of the people: which is the sum total of an earthly kingdom.

JULY 81

VANITY OF WORLDLY JOYS.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."—1 John ii. 15.

THE greatest vanity of this world is remarkable in this, that all its joys summed up together are not big enough to counterpoise the evil of one sharp disease, or to allay a sorrow. For imagine a man great in his dominion as Cyrus, rich as Solomon, victorious as David, beloved like Titus, learned as Trismegist, powerful as all the Roman greatness ; all this, and the results of all this, give him no more pleasure, in the midst of a fever or the tortures of the stone, than if he were only lord of a little dish, and a dishful of fountain water. Indeed the excellency of a holy conscience is a comfort and a magazine of joy, so great, that it sweetens the most bitter portion of the world, and makes tortures and death not only tolerable, but amiable ; and, therefore, to part with this, whose excellency is so great, for the world, that is of so inconsiderable a worth as not to have in it recompense enough for the sorrows of a sharp disease, is a bargain fit to be made by none but fools and madmen.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE.

“Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.”—1 Pet. i. 5, 6.

MAN hath but one entrance into the world; but a thousand ways to pass from thence. And as it is in the natural, so it is in the spiritual: nothing but the union of faith and obedience can secure our regeneration and our new birth, and can bring us to see the light of heaven; but there are a thousand passages of turning into darkness. And it is not enough that our bodies are exposed to so many sad infirmities and dishonourable imperfections, unless our soul also be a subject capable of so many diseases, irregular passions, false principles, accursed habits and degrees of perverseness, that the very kinds of them are reducible to a method, and make up the part of a science. There are variety of stages and descents to death, as there are diversity of torments, and of sad regions of misery in hell, which is the centre and kingdom of sorrows. For every one of these stages of sin, God hath measured out a proportion of mercy: for, “If sin abounds, grace shall much more abound.”

GOD'S WARNINGS.

"We are chastened . . . that we should not be condemned."—1 Cor. xi. 32.

THAT Italian gentleman was certainly a great lover of his sleep, who was angry with the lizard that waked him, when a viper was creeping into his mouth. When the devil is entering into us to poison our spirits, and steal our souls away while we are sleeping in the lethargy of sin, God sends His sharp messages to awaken us; and we call that the enemy, and use arts to cure the remedy, not to cure the disease. There are some persons that will never be cured, not because the sickness is incurable, but because they have ill stomachs, and cannot keep the medicine. Just so is his case that so despises God's method of curing him by these instances of longsufferance, that he uses all the arts he can to be quit of his physician, and to spill his physic, and to take cordials as soon as his vomit begins to work. There is no more to be said in this affair, but to read the poor wretch's sentence, and to declare his condition. As at first, when he despised the first great mercies, God sent him sharpness and sad accidents to ensober his spirits: so now that he despises His mercy also, the mercy of the rod, God will take it away from him.

RULES FOR GOOD LIVING.

*"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God,
that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day."*—
Eph. vi. 13.

IF we as earnestly pursue virtues which are acted in private, as those whose scene lies in public ; if we pray in private, under the only eye of God and His ministering angels, as in churches ; if we give our alms in secret rather than in public ; if we take more pleasure in the just satisfaction of our consciences than in securing our reputation ; if we rather pursue innocence than seek an excuse ; if we desire to please God, though we lose our fame with men ; if we be just to the poorest servant as to the greatest prince ; if we choose to be among the jewels of God, though we be "the off-scouring" of the world ; if, when we are secure from witnesses and accusers, and not obnoxious to the notices of the law, we think ourselves obliged by conscience and practice, and live accordingly : then our services and intentions in virtue are right ; then we are past the twilights of conversion, and the umbrages of the world, and walk in the light of God, of His word and of His Spirit, of grace and reason, as becometh not babes, but men in Christ Jesus.

AUGUST 4

CHRISTIAN INDUSTRY.

"Fervent in spirit; serving the Lord."—Rom. xii. 11.

NO man is grown in grace, but he that is ready for every work, that chooses not his employment, that refuses no imposition from God or his superior. A ready hand, an obedient heart, and a willing, cheerful soul, in all the work of God, and in every office of religion, is a great index of a good proficient in the ways of godliness. The heart of a man is like a wounded hand or arm, which, if it be so cured that it can only move one way, and cannot turn to all postures and natural uses, it is but imperfect, and still half in health and half wounded. So is our spirit; if it be apt for prayer and close-fisted in alms, if it be sound in faith and dead in charity, if it be religious to God and unjust to our neighbour, there wants some integral part, or there is a lameness; and the deficiency in any one duty implies the guilt of all, said St. James; and every fault spoils a grace, but one grace alone cannot make a good man.

GOD'S GUARDIAN MERCIES.


"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."—Psa. ciii. 2.

THE poorest person amongst us hath enough about him, and the accidents of every day, to shame him into repentance. Does not God send His "angels to keep thee in all thy ways"? are not they ministering spirits sent forth to wait upon thee as thy guard? art not thou kept from drowning, from fracture of bones, from madness, from deformities, by the riches of the Divine goodness? Tell the joints of thy body; dost thou want a finger? And if thou dost not understand how great a blessing that is, do but remember, how ill thou canst spare the use of it when thou hast but a thorn in it. The very privative blessings, the blessings of immunity, safeguard, and integrity, which we all enjoy, deserve a thanksgiving of a whole life. "We despise the riches of the Divine goodness," which preserves us from such evils, which would be full of horror and amazement, if they should happen to us.

AUGUST 6

THE MISSION OF AFFLICTION.

"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."—Heb. xii. 6.

S when a famine had been in Israel in the days of Ahab for three years and a-half, when the angry prophet Elijah met the king, and presently a great wind arose, and the dust blew into the eyes of them that walked abroad, and the face of the heavens was black and all tempest, yet then the prophet was most gentle, and God began to forgive, and the heavens were more beautiful than when the sun puts on the brightest ornaments of a bridegroom, going from his chambers of the east: so it is in the economy of the Divine mercy. When God makes our faces black, and the wind blows so loud till the cordage cracks, and our gay fortunes split, and our houses are dressed with cypress and yew, "and the mourners go about the streets," this is nothing but the "*pompa misericordiæ*," this is the funeral of our sins, dressed indeed with emblems of mourning, and proclaimed with sad accents of death. But the sight is refreshing, as the beauties of the field which God had blessed, and the sounds are healthful as the noise of a physician.

THE GLORIES OF HEAVEN.

"Neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."—

1 Cor. ii. 9.

WHEN the Christian's last pit is digged, when he is descended to his grave, and hath finished his state of sorrows and suffering; then God opens the river of abundance, the rivers of life and never-ceasing felicities. And this is that which God promised to His people: "I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." So much as moments are exceeded by eternity, and the sighing of a man by the joys of an angel, and a salutary frown by the light of God's countenance, a few groans by the infinite and eternal hallelujahs; so much are the sorrows of the godly to be undervalued in respect of what is deposited for them in the treasures of eternity. Their sorrows can die, but so cannot their joys. And if the blessed martyrs and confessors were asked concerning their past sufferings and their present rest, and the joys of their certain expectation, you should hear them glory in nothing but in the mercies of God, and "in the cross of the Lord Jesus."

AUGUST 8

WALKING IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

*"There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord,
Thou knowest it altogether."*—Psa. cxxxix. 4.

THEY who are servants of the eyes of God, and walk as in the Divine presence, perceive the same restraints in darkness, and closets, and grots, as in the light and midst of theatres ; and that consideration imposes upon us a happy necessity of doing virtuously, which presents us placed in the eyes of our Judge. And, therefore, it was not unhandsomely said by a Jewish doctor, "If every man would consider God to be the great eye of the world, watching perpetually over all our actions, and that His hand is indefatigable, and His ear ever open, possibly sin might be extirpated from off the face of the earth." And this is the condition of beatitude ; and the blessed souls within their regions of light and felicity cannot sin, because of the vision beatifical, they always behold the face of God. And those who partake of this state by way of consideration, which is essential to the condition of the blessed, and derive it into practice and discourse, in proportion to this shall retain an innocence and a part of glory.

PRESSING AFTER JESUS.

"My soul followeth hard after Thee."—Psa. lxxiii. 8.

IT was not without great reason advised, that every man should propound the example of a wise and virtuous personage, as Cato, or Socrates, or Brutus ; and, by a fiction of imagination, to suppose him present as a witness, and really to take his life as the direction of all our actions. But how happy and richly furnished are Christians with precedents of saints, whose faith and revelations have been productive of more spiritual graces, and greater degrees of moral perfections ! And this I call the privilege of a very great assistance, that I might advance the reputation and account of the life of the glorious Jesus, which is not abated by the imperfections of human nature, as they were, but receives great heightenings and perfection from the divinity of His person, of which they were never capable. Let us therefore press after Jesus, as Elisha did after his master, with an inseparable prosecution, even whithersoever He goes ; that, according to the reasonableness and proportion expressed in St. Paul's advice, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

AUGUST 10

THE WORKING OF THE SPIRIT.


"The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."—

Rom. viii. 26.

MARK the rain that falls from above, and the same shower that dropped out of one cloud increaseth sundry plants in a garden, and severally according to the condition of every plant: in one stalk it makes a rose, in another a violet, divers in a third, and sweet in all. So the Spirit works its multiformous effects in several complexions, and all according to the increase of God. Is thy habit and inclination choleric? Why, try thyself if thou be very apt to be zealous in a good cause, and it turns thy natural infirmity into holy heat. Is melancholy predominant? The grace of God will turn that sad humour into devotion, prayer, and mortifying thy pleasures to die unto the world. Is thy temperature sanguine and cheerful? The goodness of God will allow it unto thee in thy civil life, in a good mean; but over and above, it will make thee bountiful, easy to pardon injuries, glad of reconciliation, comfortable to the distressed, always rejoicing in the Lord.

GOD'S BOUNTIFULNESS.

God . . giveth to all men liberally.—James i. 5.

S the sun sends forth a benign and gentle influence on the seed of plants, that it may invite forth the active and plastic power from its recess and secrecy, that by rising into the tallness and dimensions of a tree it may still receive a greater and more refreshing influence from its foster-father, the prince of all the bodies of light ; and in all these emanations, the sun itself receives no advantage, but the honour of doing benefits ; so doth the Almighty Father of all the creatures. He at first sends forth His blessings upon us, that we, by using them aright, should make ourselves capable of greater ; while the giving glory to God, and doing homage to Him, are nothing for His advantage, but only for ours ; our duties towards Him being like vapours ascending from the earth, not at all to refresh the region of the clouds, but to return back in a fruitful and refreshing shower. And God created us, not that we can increase His felicity, but that He might have a subject receptive of felicity from Him.

AUGUST 12

REJOICING IN TRIBULATION

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer."—John xvi. 33.

DID ever any man see, or story tell, that any tyrant-prince kissed his rods and axes, his sword of justice, and his imperial ensigns of power? But we read of many martyrs who kissed their chains, and hugged their stakes, and saluted their hangman with great endearments; and yet, abating the incursions of their seldom sins, these are their greatest evils; and such they are with which a wise and a good man may be in love. And till the sinners and ungodly men can be so with their deep groans and broken sleeps, with the wrath of God and their portions of eternity; till they can rejoice in death and long for a resurrection, and with delight and a greedy hope can think of the day of judgment; we must conclude that their glass gems and finest pageantry, their splendid outsides and great powers of evil, cannot make amends for that estate of misery, which is their portion with a certainty as great as is the truth of God, and all the articles of the Christian creed.

TWO KINDS OF RELIGION.

"O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day."—Psa. cxix. 97.

SOME persons there are who dare not sin; they dare not omit their hours of prayer, and they are restless in their spirits till they have done; but they go to it as to execution. They stay from it as long as they can, and they drive, like Pharaoh's chariots, with the wheels off, sadly and heavily. And, besides that, such persons have reserved to themselves the best part of their sacrifice, and do not give their will to God; they do not love Him with all their heart; they are, also, soonest tempted to retire and fall off. But he that is "grown in grace," and hath made religion habitual to his spirit, is not at ease but when he is doing the works of the new man. He rests in religion, and comforts his sorrows with thinking of his prayers; and in all crosses of the world he is patient, because his joy is at hand to refresh him when he list, for he cares not so he may serve God; and if you make him poor here, he is rich there, and he counts that to be his proper service, his work, his recreation, and reward.

AUGUST 14

VANITY OF THIS WORLD.

"Turn from these vanities unto the living God."—
Acts xiv. 15.

THE Egyptians used to serve up a skeleton to their feasts, that the dissolutions and vapours of wine might be restrained with that bunch of myrrh, and the vanities of their eyes chastised by that sad object: for they thought it unlikely a man should be transported far with any thing low or vicious, that looked long and often into the hollow eye-pits of a death's head, or dwelt in a charnel-house. And such considerations make all the importunity and violence of sensual desires to disband. For when a man stands perpetually at the door of eternity, and, as did John the almoner, every day is building of his sepulchre, and every night one day of our life is gone and past into the possession of death, it will concern us to take care that the door leading to hell do not open upon us, that we be not crushed to ruin by the stones of our grave, and that our death become not a consignation of us to a sad eternity. For all the pleasures of the whole world, and in all its duration, cannot make recompense for one hour's torment in hell.

LOOKING UNTO GOD.

"Leaving the principles, . . . let us go on unto perfection."—Heb. vi. 1.

DO not trouble yourself by thinking how much you are afflicted, but consider how much you make of it: for reflex acts upon the suffering itself can lead to nothing but to pride, or to impatience, to temptation, or to apostasy. He that measures the grains and scruples of his persecution, will soon sit down and call for ease, or for a reward; will think the time long, or his burden great; will be apt to complain of his condition, or set a greater value upon his person. Look not back upon him that strikes thee, but upward to God that supports thee, and forward to the crown that is set before thee: and then consider, if the loss of thy estate hath taught thee to despise the world, whether thy poor fortune hath made thee poor in spirit, and if thy uneasy prison sets thy soul at liberty, and knocks off the fetters of a worse captivity. For then the rod of sufferings turns into crowns and sceptres, when every suffering is a precept, and every change of condition produces a holy resolution, and the state of sorrows makes the resolution actual and habitual, permanent and persevering.

AUGUST 16

CLOTHED IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation."—

Isa. lxi. 10.

AS the silkworm eateth itself out of a seed to become a little worm ; and there feeding on the leaves of mulberries, it grows till its coat be off, and then works itself into a house of silk ; then casting its pearly seeds for the young to breed, it leaveth its silk for man, and dieth all white and winged in the shape of a flying creature : so is the progress of souls. When they are regenerate, and have cast off their first stains and the skin of worldly vanities, by feeding on the leaves of Scriptures, and the fruits of the vine, and the joys of the sacrament, they encircle themselves in the rich garments of holy and virtuous habits. Then, by leaving their blood, which is the church's seed, to raise up a new generation to God, they leave a blessed memory and fair example, and are themselves turned into angels, whose felicity is to do the will of God, as their employment was in this world to suffer.


P A T I E N C E.

"If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."—Rom. viii. 25.

SINCE it is a condition of necessity, established by Divine decrees, and fixed by the indispensable laws of nature, that we shall, after a very little duration, pass on to a condition strange, not understood, then unalterable, and yet of great mutation from this, even of greater distance from that in which we are here, than this is from the state of beasts; this, when it is considered, must, in all reason, make the same impression upon our understandings and affections, which naturally all strange things, and all great considerations, are apt to do; that is, create resolutions and results passing through the heart of man, such as are reasonable and prudent, in order to our own felicities, that we neglect the vanities of the present temptation, and secure our future condition, which will, till eternity itself expires, remain such as we make it to be by our deportment in this short transition and passage through the world.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."—Matt. xvi. 24.

HRIST, that quitted all the glories that were essential to Him, and that grew up in His nature when He lodged in His Father's bosom ; Christ, that suffered all the evils due for the sins of mankind, Himself remaining most innocent ; Christ, that promised persecution, injuries, and affronts, as part of our present portion, and gave them to His disciples as a legacy, and gave us His Spirit to enable us to suffer injuries, and made that the parts of suffering evils should be the matter of three or four Christian graces, of patience, of fortitude, of long-suffering, and perseverance ; He, that of eight beatitudes made that of five of them should be instanced in the matter of humiliation and suffering temporal inconvenience ; that blessed Master was certainly desirous that His disciples should take their crowns from the cross, not from the evenness and felicities of the world ; He intended we should give something, and suffer more things, and forgive all things, all injuries whatsoever.

THE GODLY MAN'S SECURITY.

"Thou art my portion, O Lord."—Psa. cxix. 57.

THE godly man is timorous, and yet safe; tossed by the seas, and yet safe at anchor; impaired by evil accidents, and righted by divine comforts; abused by the world, and yet an heir of heaven; hated by men, and beloved by God; he quits a convenient lodging-room, and purchases a glorious country; is forsaken by friends, but never by a good conscience; he fares hardly, and sleeps sweetly; he flies from his enemies, but hath no distracting fears; he is full of thought, but of no amazement; it is his business to be troubled, and his portion to be comforted; he hath nothing to afflict him, but the loss of that which might be his danger, but can never be his good. And in the recompense of this he hath God for his Father, Christ for his Captain, the Holy Ghost for his supporter; so that he shall have all the good which God can give him, and of all that good he hath the holy Trinity for an earnest and a gage for his maintenance at the present, and his portion to all eternity.

AUGUST 20

GOD'S GRACE STRONGER THAN ANY TEMPTATION.

*"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of
temptations."*—2 Pet. ii. 9.

BET the temptation be never so strong, every Christian man hath assistances sufficient to support him, so as that, without his own yielding, no temptation is stronger than that grace which God offers him; for if it were, it were not so much as a sin of infirmity; it were no sin at all. There, therefore, must be certain to us; when the violence of our passions or desires overcomes our resolutions and fairer purposes, against the dictate of our reason, that indeed is a state of infirmity, but it is also of sin and death, a state of immortification; because the offices of grace are, to crucify the old man, that is our former and impurer conversation, to subvert the pre-eminence of our passions, to reduce them to reason, and to restore empire and dominion to the rational faculties. So that this condition, in proper yielding, is not so good as the infirmity of grace, but it is no state at all: for whoever "are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts;" when their imperfect, ineffective resolutions are but the first approach of the kingdom of Christ, nothing but the lightnings dark as soon as light.

TRIALS FIT US FOR GOD'S TEMPLE.

"We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed."—
Rom. v. 3-5.

TROUBLE is certainly the lot of our nature and inheritance, and we are so sure to be tempted, that in the deepest peace and silence of spirit oftentimes is our greatest danger; not to be tempted is sometimes our most subtle temptation. It is certain, then, we cannot be secure when our security is our enemy; but therefore we must do as God Himself does, make the best of it, and not be sad at that which is the public portion and the case of all men, but order it according to the intention, place it in the eye of virtue, that all its actions and motions may tend thither, there to be changed into felicities. But certain it is, unless we first be cut and hewn in the mountains, we shall not be fixed in the temple of God; but, by incision and contusions, our roughnesses may become plain, or our sparks kindled, and we may be, either for the temple or the altar, spiritual building or holy fire, something that God shall delight in, and then the temptation was not amiss.

AUGUST 22

AVOIDANCE OF TEMPTATION.

"Be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil . . . walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."—
1 Pet. v. 8.

AN Egyptian who acknowledged fire for his god, one day doing his devotions, kissed his god after the manner of worshippers, and burnt his lips. It was not in the power of that false and imaginary deity to cure the real hurt he had done to his devoutest worshipper. Just such a fool is he that kisses a danger, though with a design of virtue, and hugs an opportunity of sin for an advantage of piety ; he burns himself in the neighbourhood of the flame, and twenty to one but he may perish in its embraces. And he that looks out a danger, that he may overcome it, does as did the Persian, who, worshipping the sun, looked upon him when he prayed him to cure his sore eyes. The sun may as well cure a weak eye, or a great burden knit a broken arm, as a danger can do him advantage, that seeks such a combat which may ruin him, and after which he rarely may have this reward, that it may be said of him he had the good fortune not to perish in his folly. It is easier to prevent a mischief than to cure it.

AUGUST 23

PRAYER FOR SANCTIFICATION.

"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."—
Psa. li. 7.



DEAREST God, who hast framed man of soul and body, and fitted him with faculties and proportionable instruments to serve Thee according to all our capacities, let Thy Holy Spirit rule and sanctify every power and member, both of soul and body, that they may keep that beauteous order, which, in our creation, Thou didst intend, and to which Thou dost restore Thy people in the renovations of grace ; that our affections may be guided by reason, our understanding may be enlightened with Thy word, and then may guide and persuade our will ; that we suffer no violent transportation of passions, nor be overcome by a temptation, nor consent to the impure solicitations of lust ; that "sin may not reign in our mortal bodies," but that both bodies and souls may be conformable to the sufferings of the holy Jesus ; that in our body we may bear the marks and dying of our Lord, and in our spirits we may be humble and mortified, and like Him in all His imitable perfections.

AUGUST 24

DYING TO THE WORLD.

"Mortify . . . your members which are upon the earth."—Col. iii. 5.

WE must not only be strangers here, but we must be dead too, "dead unto the world:" that is, we must not only deny our vices, but our passions; not only contradict the direct immediate persuasion to a sin, but also cross the inclination to it. So long as our appetites are high and full, we shall never have peace or safety, but the dangers and insecurities of a full war and a potent enemy; we are always disputing the question, ever struggling for life. But when our passions are killed, when our desires are little and low, then grace reigns, then "our life is hid with Christ in God;" then we have fewer interruptions in the way of righteousness; then we are not so apt to be surprised by sudden eruptions and transportations of passions, and our piety itself is more prudent and reasonable, chosen with a freer election, discerned with clearer understanding, hath more in it of judgment than of fancy, and is more spiritual and angelical.

THE DEVIL'S BLANDISHMENTS.

"Neither give place to the devil."—Eph iv. 27.

THE devil is always prompting us to change our stones into bread, our sadnesses into sensual comfort, our drynesses into inundations of fancy and exterior sweetnesses : for he knows that the ascetic tables of mortification and the stones of the desert are more healthful than the fulnesses of voluptuousness and the corn of the valleys. He cannot endure we should live a life of austerity or self-denial : if he can get us but to satisfy our senses, and a little more freely to please our natural desires, he then hath a fair field for the battle ; but so long as we force him to fight in hedges and morasses, encircling and crowding up his strengths into disadvantages, by our stone walls, our hardnesses of discipline and rudenesses of mortification, we can with more facility repel his flatteries, and receive fewer incommodities of spirit. But thus the devil will abuse us by the impotency of our natural desires ; and therefore let us go to God for satisfaction of our wishes.

AUGUST 26

THE GENTLE LIFE.

"He leadeth me beside the still waters."—

Psa. xxiii. 2.

IVERY great change, every violence of fortune, every eminence and unevenness whatsoever, whether of person, or accident, or circumstance, puts us to a new trouble, requires a distinct care, creates new dangers, objects more temptations, marks us out the objects of envy, makes our standing more insecure, and our fall more contemptible and ridiculous. But an even life, spent with as much rigour of duty to God as ought to be, yet in the same manner of devotions, in the undertaking of ordinary offices, in bearing public burdens, frequenting public assemblies, performing offices of civility, receiving all the rites of an established religion, complying with national customs, and hereditary solemnities of a people ; in nothing disquieting public peace, or disrelishing the great instruments of an innocent communion, or dissolving the circumstantial ligaments of charity, or breaking laws, and the great relations and necessitudes of the world, out of fancy or singularity, is the best way to live holily, and safely, and happily.

AUGUST 27

PRAYER AGAINST TEMPTATION.

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart."—Psa. xxvii. 14.

GRACIOUS Father, we are weak and ignorant, our affections betray us, and make us willing to die, "our adversary the devil goeth up and down, seeking whom he may devour;" he is busy and crafty, malicious and powerful, watchful and envious; and we tempt ourselves, running out to mischief, delighting in the approaches of sin, and love to have necessities put upon us, that sin may be unavoidable. Pity us in the midst of these disorders; and give us spiritual strength, holy resolutions, a watchful spirit, the whole armour of God, and Thy protection, the guard of angels, and the conduct of Thy Holy Spirit to be our security in the day of danger. Give us Thy grace to fly from all occasions to sin, that we may never tempt ourselves, nor delight to be tempted; and let Thy blessed providence so order the accidents of our lives, that we may not dwell near an enemy; and when Thou shalt try us, and suffer us to enter into combat, let us always be on Thy side, and fight valiantly, resist the devil, and endure patiently, and persevere constantly unto the end, that Thou mayest crown Thy own work in us.

AUGUST 28

GUARDING AGAINST THE EVIL ONE,

"Rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."—Phil. iii. 3.

WHEN the devil could do no good, "he departed for a time." If he could ever have spied a time of returning, he wanted not will nor malice to observe and use it. And although Jesus was a person without danger, yet I doubt not but the Holy Ghost described the circumstance that we should not have the securities of a deep peace when we have had the success of conquerors, for a surprise is most full of horror and of more certain ruin; so that we have no security, but a perpetual observation; that, together with the grace of God (who takes care of all His servants, and will drive away the tempter when He pleases, and help us always when we need), is as great an argument for our confidence, and encouragement to our prayers and address to God, as it is safety to our person, and honour to our victory. And let us account it our honour, that the trials of temptation, which is the greatest sadness of our condition, are hallowed by the temptation of Jesus, and our condition assured by His assistances, and the assistances procured by our prayers.

AUGUST 29

DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS.

"Having their conscience seared with a hot iron."—

1 Tim. iv. 2.

THERE are some who have great peace, no fightings within, no troubles without, no disputes or contradictions in their spirit. But these men have the peace of tributaries, or a conquered people; the gates of their city stand open day and night, that all the carriages may enter without disputing the pass: the flesh and the spirit dispute not, because the spirit is there in pupilage or in bonds, and the flesh rides in triumph, with the tyranny and pride of a female tyrant. For, in the sense of religion, we all are warriors or slaves; either ourselves are stark dead in trespasses and sins, or we need to stand perpetually upon our guard in continual observation, and in contestation against our lusts and our passions; so long denying and contradicting our own wills, till we will and choose to do things against our wills, having an eye always to those infinite satisfactions which shall glorify our wills and all our faculties, when we arrive to that state in which there shall be no more contradiction, but only that "our mortal shall put on immortality."

AUGUST 30

KEEPING THE BODY IN SUBJECTION.

"To be carnally minded is death."—Rom. viii. 6.

THE body is the shop and forge of the soul, in which all her designs, which are transient upon external objects, are framed: and it is a good servant, as long as it is kept in obedience and under discipline; but "he that breeds his servant delicately," will find him contumacious and troublesome, bold and confident as his son. And, therefore, St. Paul's practice (as himself gives account of it) was "to keep his body under, and bring it into subjection, lest he should become a castaway;" for the desires of the body are, in the same things in which themselves are satisfied, so many injuries to the soul; because upon every one of the appetites a restraint is made, and a law placed for sentinel, that if we transgress the bounds fixed by the Divine commandment, it becomes a sin. And, therefore, this is what St. Paul said, "When we were in the flesh, the passions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."

HUMBLE WALKING WITH GOD.

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord."—

James iv. 10.

FAMILIARITY with God is nothing else but an admission to be of God's family, the admission of a servant, or a son in minority, and implies obedience, duty, and fear on our parts; care, and providence, and love on God's part : and it is not the familiarity of sons, but the impudence of proud equals, to express this pretended privilege in even, unmannerly, and irreverent addresses and discourses : and it is a sure rule, that whatsoever heights of piety, union, or familiarity any man pretends to, it is of the devil, unless the greater the pretence be, the greater also be the humility of the man. The highest flames are the most tremulous ; and so are the most holy and eminently religious persons more full of awfulness, and fear, and modesty, and humility : so that, in true divinity and right speaking, there is no such thing as the unitive way of religion, save only in the effects of duty, obedience, and the expresses of the precise virtue of religion. Let no man be hasty to eat of the fruits of paradise before his time.

SEPT. 1

CONSISTENT GODLINESS.


"Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"—Job ii. 10.

SOME men are very good when they are afflicted. When the gown of the day is the mantle of the night, and cannot at the same time cover the head and make the feet warm; when they have but one broken dish and no spoon, then they are humble and modest; then they can suffer an injury and bear contempt: but give them riches, and they grow insolent; fear and pusillanimity did their first work, and an opportunity to sin undoes it all. "You have spoiled a good trooper," said Galba, "when you made me a bad commander." Others can never serve God but when they are prosperous; if they lose their fortune, they lose their faith, and quit their charity; if they become poor, they become liars and deceivers of their trust, envious and greedy, restless and uncharitable; that is, one way or other they show that they love the world, and by all the faith they pretend to cannot overcome it.

Cast up, therefore, your reckonings impartially; see what is, what will be required at your hands; do not think you can be justified by faith, unless your faith be greater than all your passions.

THOROUGH CHRISTIANITY.

"Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God."—
Deut. xviii. 13.

NCE for all, let us remember this, that Christianity is the most profitable, the most useful, and the most bountiful institution in the whole world ; and the best definition I can give of it is this ;—It is the wisdom of God brought down amongst us to do good to men, and therefore we must not do less than the Pharisees, who did the outward work ; at least, let us be sure to do all the work that is laid before us in the commandments. And it is strange that this should be needful to be pressed amongst Christians, whose religion requires so very much more. But so it is, upon a pretence that we must serve God with the mind, some are such fools as to think that it is enough to have a good meaning. And because we must serve God in the spirit, therefore they will not serve God with their bodies. This, therefore, must be pre-supposed : we must take care that even our bodies bear a part in our spiritual services. Our voice and tongue, our hands and our feet, and our very bowels must be servants of God, and do the work of the commandments.

SEPT. 8

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

"O Lord, Thou art our Father."—Isa. lxiv. 8.

MERCIFUL and gracious ! Thou gavest me being, raisedst me from nothing, to be an excellent creation, efforming me after Thine own image, tenderly feeding me, and conducting and strengthening me all my days : Thou art our Father by a more excellent mercy, adopting us in a new birth, to become partakers of the inheritance of Jesus ; Thou hast given us the portion and the food of sons ; O make us to do the duty of sons, that we may never lose our title to so glorious an inheritance.

Heaven is Thy throne, the earth is Thy footstool : from Thy throne Thou beholdest all the dwellers upon earth, and triest out the hearts of men, and nothing is hid from Thy sight. And as Thy knowledge is infinite, so is Thy power uncircumscribed as the utmost orb of heaven, and Thou sittest in Thine own essential happiness and tranquillity, immovable and eternal. That is our country, and thither Thy servants are travelling ; there is our Father, and that is our inheritance ; there our hearts are, for there our treasure is laid up till the day of recompense.

THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS.

"Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."—Eph. iv. 32.



DEAR God, unless Thou art pleased to pardon us, in vain it is that we should live here : and what good will our life do us ? O look upon us with much mercy, for we have sinned grievously against Thee. Pardon the adherent imperfections of our life, the weaknesses of our duty, the carelessness of our spirit, our affected ignorance, our indiligence, our rashness and want of observation, our malice and presumptions. Turn Thine eyes from our impurities, and behold the brightness and purest innocence of the holy Jesus ; and under His cover we plead our cause, not that Thou shouldest judge our sins, but give us pardon, and blot out all our iniquities, that we may never enter into the horrible regions where there are torments without ceasing, a prison without ransom, reproaches without comfort, anguish without patience, darkness without light, "a worm that never dies, and the fire that never goeth out."

But be pleased also to give us great charity, that we may truly forgive all that trouble or injure us, that by that character Thou mayest discern us.

SEPT. 5

FALSE APPEALS TO CONSCIENCE.

"The ways of a man are clean in his own eyes."—
Prov. xvi. 2.

NOTHING is more usual than to pretend conscience to all the actions of men which are public, and whose nature cannot be concealed. If arms be taken up in a violent war, inquire of both sides why they engage on that part respectively; they answer, because of their conscience. Ask a schismatic why he refuses to join in the communion of the church; he tells you, it is against his conscience:—and the disobedient refuse to submit to laws; and they also, in many cases, pretend conscience. And so suspicion, and jealousy, and disobedience, and rebellion are become conscience; in which there is neither knowledge, nor revelation, nor truth, nor charity, nor reason, nor religion. Every man's way seems right in his own eyes; and what they think is not against conscience, they think or pretend to think it is an effect of conscience; and so their fond persuasions and fancies are made sacred, and conscience is pretended, and themselves and every man else is abused.

GOD'S HOLY NAME.

"I . . . will sing praise to the name of the Lord most high."—Psa. vii. 17.

THY name, O God, is glorious, and in Thy name is our hope and confidence: according to Thy name, so is Thy praise unto the world's end. They that love Thy name shall be joyful in Thee; for Thy name which Thou madest to be proclaimed unto Thy people is, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty." In this glorious name we worship Thee, O Lord; and all they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee. The desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee. Thou art worthy, O Lord, of honour, and praise, and glory, for ever and ever: we confess Thy glories, we rejoice in Thy mercies; we hope in Thy name, and Thy saints like it well: for Thy name is praised unto the ends of the world; it is believed by faith, relied upon by a holy hope, and loved by a great charity.

SEPT. 7

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

"It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."—John vi. 63.

THE Spirit of God is that in our spiritual life that a man's soul is in his natural: without it we are but a dead and lifeless trunk. But then, as man's soul, in proportion to the several operations of life, obtains several appellatives (it is vegetative and nutritive, sensitive and intellective, according as it operates), so is the Spirit of God. He is the Spirit of regeneration in baptism, of renovation in repentance; the Spirit of love, and the Spirit of holy fear; the Searcher of the hearts, and the Spirit of discerning; the Spirit of wisdom, and the Spirit of prayer. In one mystery He illuminates, and in another He feeds us: He begins in one, and finishes and perfects in another. It is the same Spirit working divers operations. For He is all this now reckoned, and He is every thing else that is the principle of good unto us; He is the beginning and the progression, the consummation and perfection of us all: and yet every work of His is perfect in its kind, and in order to His own designation; and from the beginning to the end is perfection all the way.

SUBDUING THE BODY.

"Keep under the body, and bring it into subjection."—

1 Cor. ix. 27.

SUPPRESS your desires in their first approach ; for then they are least, and your faculties and election are stronger ; but if they, in their weakness, prevail upon your strengths, there will be no resisting them when they are increased, and your abilities lessened. You shall scarce obtain of them to end, if you suffer them to begin.

Divert them with some laudable employment, and take off their edge by inadvertency, or a not-attending to them. For, since the faculties of a man cannot at the same time, with any sharpness, attend to two objects, if you employ your spirit upon a book, or a bodily labour, or any innocent and indifferent employment, you have no room left for the present trouble of a sensual temptation. For to this sense it was that Alexander told the Queen of Caria that his tutor Leonidas had provided two cooks for him ; "Hard marches all night, and a small dinner the next day:" these tamed his youthful aptnesses to dissoluteness, so long as he ate of their provisions.

SPIRITUAL HONESTY.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."—1 John i. 8.

WE are to suspect our conscience to be misinformed, when we are not willing to inquire into the particulars. He that searches, desires to find, and so far takes the right course : for truth can never hurt a man, though it may prejudice his vice, and his affected folly. In the inquiries after truth, every man should have a traveller's indifference, wholly careless whether this or that be the right way, so he may find it. For we are not to choose the way because it looks fair, but because it leads surely. And to this purpose, the most hearty and particular inquest is most prudent and effective. But we are afraid of truth when we will not inquire, that is, when the truth is against our interest or passion, our lust or folly—seemingly against us, in the present indisposition of our affairs.

He that resolves upon the conclusion before the premises, inquiring into particulars to confirm his opinion at a venture, not to shake it if it be false, or to establish it only in case it be true, unless he be defended by chance, is sure to mistake, or at least can never be sure whether he does or no.

AN ACT OF ADORATION.

*"They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the
majesty of the Lord."—Isa. xxiv. 14.*

HOLY, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come : heaven and earth, angels and men, the air and the sea, give glory, and honour, and thanks to Him that sitteth on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever. All the blessed spirits and souls of the righteous cast their crowns before the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power ; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created. Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty : just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Thy wisdom is infinite, Thy mercies are glorious ; and I am not worthy, O Lord, to appear in Thy presence, before whom the angels hide their faces. O holy and eternal Jesus, Lamb of God, who wert slain from the beginning of the world, Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign with Thee for ever. Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever.

SEPT. 11

AVOIDANCE OF SLOTH.

"The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns."

—Prov. xv. 19.

SO long as idleness is quite shut out from our lives, there is but little room left for temptation ; and, therefore, to a busy man temptation is fain to climb up together with his businesses, and sins creep upon him only by accidents and occasions ; whereas to an idle person they come in a full body, and with open violence, and the impudence of a restless importunity.

Idleness is called "the sin of Sodom and her daughters," and indeed is "the burial of a living man ;" an idle person being so useless to any purposes of God and man, that he is like one that is dead, unconcerned in the changes and necessities of the world ; and he only lives to spend his time, and eat the fruits of the earth : like a vermin or a wolf, when their time comes they die and perish, and in the mean time do no good ; they neither plough nor carry burdens ; all that they do is either unprofitable or mischievous.

Idleness is the greatest prodigality in the world ; it throws away that which is invaluable in respect of its present use, and irreparable when it is past, being to be recovered by no power of art or nature.

SEPT. 12

A PRAYER FOR RENEWING GRACE.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may . . . find grace to help in time of need."—Heb. iv. 16.



ETERNAL God, great Father of men and angels, who hast established the heavens and the earth in a wonderful order, making day and night to succeed each other; I make my humble address to Thy Divine Majesty. O Lord, pardon all my sins, my light and rash words, the vanity and impiety of my thoughts, my unjust and uncharitable actions, and whatsoever I have transgressed against Thee this day, or at any time before. Behold, O God, my soul is troubled in the remembrance of my sins, in the frailty and sinfulness of my flesh, exposed to every temptation, and of itself not able to resist any. Lord God of mercy, I earnestly beg of Thee to give me a great portion of Thy grace, such as may be sufficient and effectual for the mortification of all my sins, and vanities, and disorders: that, as I have formerly served my lust and unworthy desires, so now I may give myself up wholly to Thy service and the studies of a holy life. Blessed Lord, teach me frequently and sadly to remember my sins; and be Thou pleased to remember them no more: let me never forget Thy mercies, and do Thou still remember to do me good.

HEAVENLY TASTES.

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—John iii. 3.

THE Spirit of God, by enjoining us the duty of mortification, hath taught us to know that immortification of spirit is the cause of all our secret and spiritual indispositions. For as a cook told Dionysius the tyrant, that the black broth of Lacedæmon would not do well at Syracuse, unless it be tasted by a Spartan's palate; so neither can the excellences of heaven be discerned, but by a spirit disrelishing the sottish appetites of the world, and accustomed to diviner banquets. And this was mystically signified by the two altars in Solomon's temple; in the outer court whereof beasts were sacrificed, in the inner court an altar of incense: the first representing mortification or slaying of our beastly appetites; the second, the offering up our prayers, which are not likely to become a pleasant offertory, unless our impurities be removed by the atonement made by the first sacrifices. Unless our spirit be mortified, we neither can love to pray, nor can God love to hear us.

THE FINISHING OF OUR FAITH.

"By works was faith made perfect."—James ii. 22.

CHRIST is the Author and Finisher of our faith ; and when faith is finished, a good life is made perfect in our kind : let no man therefore expect events for which he hath no promise ; nor call for God's fidelity without his own faithfulness ; nor snatch at a promise without performing the condition ; nor think faith to be a hand to apprehend Christ, and to do nothing else ; for that will but deceive us, and turn religion into words, and holiness into hypocrisy, and the promises of God into a snare, and the truth of God into a lie. For when God made a covenant of faith, He made also the law of faith ; and when He admitted us to a covenant of more mercy than was in the covenant of works, or of the law, He did not admit us to a covenant of idleness, and a careless walking in a state of disobedience ; but the mercy of God leadeth us to repentance, and when He gives us better promises, He intends we should pay Him a better obedience ; when He forgives us what is past, He intends we should sin no more.

FERVENT DESIRE.

"Set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God."—1 Chron. xxii. 19.

WE must not give alms without a charitable soul, nor suffer martyrdom but in love and in obedience; and when we say our prayers, we do but misspend our time, unless our mind ascend up to God upon the wings of desire.

Desire is the life of prayer; and if you indeed desire what you pray for, you will also labour for what you desire; and if you find it otherwise with yourselves, your coming to church is but like the Pharisees going up to the temple to pray. If your heart be not present, neither will God; and then there is a sound of men and women between a pair of dead walls, from whence, because neither God nor your souls are present, you must needs go home without a blessing.

But this measure of evangelical righteousness is of principal remark in all the rites and solemnities of religion; and intends to say this, that Christian religion is something that is not seen, it is the hidden man of the heart.

SACRIFICES.

"Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."—Rom. xii. 1.

HE that offers a pure lamb to God, may dishonour Him with a foul thought : and no sacrifice is pure by the skin and colour, but by the heart and hand of him that presents it. Acts of external religion are publications of the Divine honours, but the heart does only pay them ; for there it is that God does sit judge alone ; and though He hath given us bodies to converse below with a material world, yet God's temple is in heaven, in the intellectual world ; and the spirit of a man is the sacrifice, and his purest thoughts are oblations, and holy purposes are the best presents, and the crucifixion of our passions is the best immolation, the only beasts of sacrifice, and the cross of Christ is the altar, and His passion is the salt of all our sacrifices, and His intercession makes the sweet perfume, and so atonement is made by the blood of the Lamb, and we are accepted in our services, and our wills are crowned with the rewards of a holy obedience.

SEPT. 17

THE MOSAIC LAW AND THE LAW OF CHRIST.

"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."—John i. 17.

THE Jews in their Cabala say, that the law of God was made before the creation of the world two thousand years. Their meaning is, that the decalogue, or their system of moral precepts, was nothing but an express of the tables of the law of nature, long before Moses' time given and practised by their fathers. But this was not a perfect system; it was the best that ever was since Adam broke the tables of the natural law, and let sin and weak principles into the world; and it was sufficient in the present constitution of the world; but even this also was but like "a pædagogus to bring us to Christ." In the schools of Moses they practised the first rudiments of perfection; but Christ was the last, and therefore the most perfect, lawgiver; and they that did commence under Moses the servant of God, were to proceed under Jesus Christ the Son of God: and therefore, the apostle calls Christ the end of the law: and if we will acknowledge Christ to be our lawgiver, and the gospel to be His law—called in the New Testament 'the law of liberty,' "a royal law"—then we must expect that our duty shall be further extended than to a conformity in our lives to the ten words of Moses

THE NATURAL ELEMENTS OF RELIGION.

"Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."—Eccl. xii. 13.

CHRISTIAN religion, in all its moral parts, is nothing else but the law of nature, and great reason; complying with the great necessities of all the world, and promoting the great profit of all relations, and carrying us, through all accidents of variety of chances, to that end which God hath from eternal ages purposed for all that live according to it, and which He hath revealed in Jesus Christ: and, according to the apostle's arithmetic, hath but these three parts of it; 1. Sobriety, 2. Justice, 3. Religion. "For the grace of God, bringing salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live, 1. Soberly, 2. Righteously, and 3. Godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The first contains all our deportment in our personal and private capacities, the fair treating of our bodies and our spirits. The second enlarges our duty in all relations to our neighbour. The third contains the offices of direct religion, and intercourse with God.

SEPT. 19

AN ANALYSIS OF HUMAN LIFE.

"Lord, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him!"—Psa. cxliv. 3.

REMEMBER what thou wert before thou wert begotten. Nothing. What wert thou in the first regions of thy dwelling, before thy birth? Uncleaness. What wert thou for many years after? Weakness. What in all thy life? A great sinner. What in all thy excellences? A mere debtor to God, to thy parents, to the earth, to all the creatures. But we may, if we please, use the method of the Platonists, who reduce all the causes and arguments for humility, which we can take from ourselves, to these seven heads. 1. The spirit of a man is light and troublesome. 2. His body is brutish and sickly. 3. He is constant in his folly and error, and inconstant in his manners and good purposes. 4. His labours are vain, intricate, and endless. 5. His fortune is changeable, but seldom pleasing, never perfect. 6. His wisdom comes not till he be ready to die, that is, till he be past using it. 7. His death is certain, always ready at the door, but never far off. Upon these or the like meditations, if we dwell, or frequently retire to them, we shall see nothing more reasonable than to be humble, and nothing more foolish than to be proud.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."—Matt. vi. 10.

THOU reignest in heaven and earth: O do Thou reign also in our hearts; advance the interest of religion; let Thy gospel be placed in all the regions of the earth; and let all nations come and worship Thee, laying their proud wills at Thy feet, submitting their understandings to the obedience of Jesus. Let Thy kingdom be set up gloriously over us; and do Thou reign in our spirits, by Thy Spirit of grace; subdue every lust and inordinate appetite; trample upon our pride, mortify all rebellion within us, and let all Thine and our enemies be brought into captivity, that sin may never reign in our mortal bodies; but that Christ may reign in our understanding by faith,—in the will, by charity,—in the passions, by mortification,—in all the members, by a right and chaste use of them. And when Thy kingdom that is within us hath flourished, and is advanced to that height whither Thou hast designed it, grant Thy kingdom of glory may speedily succeed; and we Thy servants be admitted to the peace and purity, the holiness and glories of that state where Thou reignest alone, and art all in all.

REASON AND APPETITE.

"Ever follow that which is good."—1 Thess. v. 15.

TWO brethren travelling together, whereof one was esteemed wise and the other little better than a fool, came to a place where the way parted. The foolish brother espying one of the roads to be fair and pleasant, and the other dirty and uneven, would needs go that way, though his wiser brother told him that in all reason that must needs be the wrong way; and his brother, being more kind than wise, though against his reason, followed his foolish brother. They went on till they fell into the hands of thieves, who robbed them, and imprisoned them till they could redeem themselves with a sum of money. These brothers accuse each other before the king as author of each other's evil. The king condemned them both; the fool, because he did not follow the direction of the wise,—and the wise, because he did follow the wilfulness of the fool. So will God deal with us at the day of judgment in the scrutinies of conscience. If appetite refuses to follow reason, and reason does not refuse to follow appetite, they have both of them taken incompetent courses, and shall perish together.

SELF KNOWLEDGE.

"The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."—Psa. cxix. 130.

NO man, how learned soever, can understand the word of God, or be at peace in the questions of religion, unless he be a master over his passions. A man must first learn himself before he can learn God. Nothing deceives a man so soon as a man's self; when a man is (that I may use Plato's expression) "mingled with his nature," and his congenial infirmities of anger and desire, he can never have anything but "a knowledge partly moral and partly natural:" his whole life is but imagination; his knowledge is inclination and opinion; he judges of heavenly things by the measures of his fears and his desires, and his reason is half of it sense, and determinable by the principles of sense. "A man learns well, when he is a philosopher in his passions." Passionate men are to be taught the first elements of religion; and let men pretend to as much learning as they please, they must begin again at Christ's cross; they must learn true mortification and crucifixion of their anger and desires, before they can be good scholars in Christ's school.

SEPT. 28

THE RELIGION OF THE HEART.

"I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart."—
Psa. cxix. 69.

TRUE it is, God works in us His graces by the sacrament ; but we must dispose ourselves to a reception of the Divine blessing by moral instruments. The soul must work together with God, and the body works together with the soul : but no external action can purify the soul, because, its nature and operations being spiritual, it can no more be changed by a ceremony or an external solemnity, than an angel can be caressed with sweet-meats, or a man's belly with music or long orations. The sum is this : no Christian does his duty to God but he that serves Him with all his heart: and although it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness, even the external also ; yet that which makes us gracious in His eyes is not the external, it is the love of the heart and the real change of the mind and obedience of the spirit ; that is the first great measure of the righteousness evangelical.

CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

"I say unto all, Watch."—Mark xiii. 37.

HE that would be free from the slavery of sin, and the necessity of sinning, must always watch. Ay, that is the point; but who can watch always? Why, every good man can watch always; and, that we may not be deceived in this, let us know that the running away from a temptation is a part of our watchfulness, and every good employment is another great part of it, and a laying in provisions of reason and religion beforehand is yet a third part of this watchfulness; and the conversation of a Christian is a perpetual watchfulness. He either prays to God for His Spirit, or relies upon the promises, or receives the sacrament, or places himself at the feet of good men to hear their wise sayings, or calls for the church's prayers, or does the duty of his calling, or actually resists temptation, or frequently renews his holy purposes, or fortifies himself by vows, or searches into his danger by a daily examination. So that, in the whole, he is for ever upon his guard.

CONSCIENCE.

"Know ye not that . . . the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"—1 Cor. iii. 16.

THAT providence which governs all the world is nothing else but God present by His providence : and God is in our hearts by His laws : He rules in us by His substitute, our conscience. God sits there and gives us laws ; and as God said to Moses, "I have made thee a god to Pharoah," that is, to give him laws, and to minister in the execution of those laws, and to inflict angry sentences upon him ; so hath God done to us. He hath given us conscience to be in God's stead to us, to give us laws, and to exact obedience to those laws, to punish them that prevaricate, and to reward the obedient. And therefore conscience is called "the household guardian," "the domestic god," "the spirit or angel of the place : " and when we call God to witness, we only mean that our conscience is right, and that God and God's vicar, our conscience, know it. So Lactantius ; "Let him remember that he hath God for his witness, that is, as I suppose, his mind ; than which God hath given to man nothing that is more divine."—In sum, it is the image of God

THE RELIGION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets."—Matt. v. 17.

ALL the moral precepts which are particulars of the natural law or universal reason, are either explications of the decalogue or precepts evangelical, by which the old prophets did "prepare the way of our Lord, and make His paths straight." It is the same religion, theirs and ours, as to the moral part : intending glory to the same God by the same principles of prime reason, differing only in the clearness and obscurity of the promises or motives of obedience, and in the particular instances of the general laws, and in the degrees of duties spiritual. But in both, God intended to bring mankind to eternal glories by religion or the spiritual worshippings of one God, by justice and sobriety—that is, by such ways as naturally we need for our natural and perfective being even in this world. Now, in these things, the prophets are preachers of righteousness, and we may refresh our souls at those rivulets springing from the wells of life, but we must fill and bathe ourselves "in the fountains of our blessed Saviour."

WE MUST OBEY, TO UNDERSTAND.

"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."—Job xxviii. 28.

WE find in Holy Scripture that to obey God, and to love Him, is the way to understand the mysteries of the kingdom. If ye will obey, then shall ye understand: and it was a rare saying of our blessed Saviour, and is of great use and confidence to all who inquire after the truth of God, in the midst of these sad divisions of Christendom,—
 "If any man will do His will, he shall know whether the doctrine be of God or no." It is not fineness of discourse, nor the sharpness of arguments, nor the witty rencounters of disputing men, that can penetrate into the mysteries of faith: the poor humble man that prays, and inquires simply, and listens attentively, and sucks in greedily, and obeys diligently, he is the man that shall know the mind of the Spirit. And therefore St. Paul observes that the sermons of the cross were "foolishness to the Greeks;" and consequently, by way of upbraiding, he inquires, "Where is the wise man, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of the world? God hath made the wisdom of the world foolishness."

PEACE OF CONSCIENCE.


"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, . . . he shall receive the blessing from the Lord."—Psa. xxiv. 4, 5.

TRUE peace of conscience is always joined with a holy fear; a fear to offend, and a fear of the Divine displeasure for what we have offended. True peace of conscience relies not upon popular noises, and is not a sleep procured by the tongues of flatterers, or opinions of men, but is a peace from within, relying upon God and its own just measures. A good conscience loses nothing of its confidence and peace for all the tortures of the world. The rack, the fire, shall not make it to repent and say, What have I purchased? But its excellency and integrity shall be resplendent in the very flames.—And this is the meaning of the proverb used by the Levantines, "Heaven and hell are seated in the heart of man." As his conscience is, so is he happy, or extremely miserable. "What other men say of us, is no more to us than what other men dream of us," said St. Gregory Nazianzen; it is our conscience that accuses or condemns to all real events and purposes.

SEPT. 29

PRAYER AGAINST ENVY.

"Let us walk honestly, as in the day; . . . not in strife and envying."—Rom. xiii. 13.

 DEAR God, never suffer the devil to rub his vilest leprosy of envy upon me; never let me have the affections of the desperate and damned; let it not be ill with me when it is well with others, but let Thy Holy Spirit so overrule me for ever, that I may pity the afflicted and be compassionate, and have a fellow-feeling of my brother's sorrows, and that I may, as much as I can, promote his good, and give Thee thanks for it, and rejoice with them that do rejoice; never censuring his actions cursedly, nor detracting from his praises spitefully, nor upbraiding his infelicities maliciously, but pleased in all things which Thou doest or givest; that I may then triumph in spirit, when Thy kingdom is advanced, when Thy Spirit rules, when Thy church is profited, when Thy saints rejoice, when the devil's interest is destroyed; truly loving Thee, and truly loving my brother; that we may altogether join in the holy communion of saints, both here and hereafter, in the measures of grace and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

DELIVERANCE FROM EVIL.

"The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom."—
2 Tim. iv. 18.

FROM sin and shame, from the malice and fraud of the devil, and from the falseness and greediness of men, from all Thy wrath, and from all impurities, good Lord, deliver Thy servants.

Do not reserve any thing of Thy wrath in store for us ; but let our sins be pardoned so fully, that Thou mayest not punish our inventions. And yet, if Thou wilt not be entreated, but that it be necessary that we suffer, Thy will be done ; smite us here with a father's rod, that Thou mayest spare us hereafter : let the sad accidents of our life be for good to us, not for evil ; for our amendment, not to exasperate or weary us, not to burden or confound us : and what evil soever it be that shall happen, let us not sin against Thee. For ever deliver us from that evil, and for ever deliver us from the power of the evil one, the great enemy of mankind, and never let our portion be in that region of darkness, in that everlasting burning, which Thou hast "prepared for the devil and his angels."

OCT. 1

WE MAGNIFY OUR TROUBLES.

"Our light affliction which is but for a moment."—

2 Cor. iv. 17.

PLUTARCH tells, that when the cowards of Lacedæmon depicted upon their shields the most terrible beasts they could imagine, their design was to affright their enemies that they might not come to a close fight; they would fain have made their enemies afraid, because themselves were so: which when Lacon espied, he painted upon a great shield nothing but a little fly for his device; and to them who said he did it that he might not be noted in the battle, he answered, "Yea, but I mean to come so near the enemy, that he shall see the little fly." This is our case: our afflictions seem to us like gorgons' heads, lions and tigers, things terrible in picture, but intolerable in their fury; but if we come near and consider them in all the circumstances, they are nothing but a fly upon a shield, they cannot hurt us; and they ought not to affright us, if we remember that they are conducted by God, that they are the effect of His care and the impress of His love, that they are the method and order of a blessing.

THE WILL OF GOD.

"For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother."—Mark iii. 35.

THY will, O God, is the measure of holiness and peace; Thy providence the great disposer of all things, tying all events together, in order to the glory and the good of Thy servants, by a wonderful mysterious chain of wisdom. Let Thy will also be the measure of our desires: for we know that whatsoever Thou sayest is true, and whatsoever Thou doest is good: grant we may submit our wills to Thine, being patient of evils which Thou inflictest, lovers of the good which Thou commandest, haters of all evil which Thou forbiddest, pleased with all the accidents Thou sendest: that though our nature is weaker than angels', yet our obedience may be as humble, our conformity to Thy will may arise up to the degrees of unity, and theirs cannot be more; that as they in heaven, so we on earth may obey Thy will promptly, cheerfully, zealously, and with all our faculties: and grant that, as they there, so all the world here may serve Thee with peace and concord, purity and love unfeigned, with one heart and one voice glorifying Thee our heavenly Father.

CHRIST'S MEDIATORSHIP.

"If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it."—John xiv. 14.

WHEN Christ was consecrated on the cross, and became our high priest, having reconciled us to God by the death of the cross, he became infinitely gracious in the eyes of God, and was admitted to the celestial and eternal priesthood in heaven; where, in the virtue of the cross, he intercedes for us, and represents an eternal sacrifice in the heavens on our behalf. That he is a priest in heaven, appears in the large discourses and direct affirmatives of St. Paul. That there is no other sacrifice to be offered, but that on the cross, it is evident, because "He hath but once appeared in the end of the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself;" and therefore, since it is necessary that He hath something to offer so long as He is a priest, and there is no other sacrifice but that of Himself offered upon the cross,—it follows that Christ, in heaven, perpetually offers and represents that sacrifice to His heavenly Father, and, in virtue of that, obtains all good things for His church.

THE DUTY OF ZEAL.

"Serve the Lord with all your heart."—1 Sam. xii. 20.

THE duty of zeal requires that we neglect an ordinary visit rather than an ordinary prayer, and a great profit rather than omit a required duty. No excuse can legitimate a sin; and he that goes about to distinguish between his duty and his profit, and, if he cannot reconcile them, will yet tie them together like a hyæna and a dog, this man pretends to religion but secures the world, and is indifferent and lukewarm towards that, so he may be warm and safe in the possession of this.

To that fervour and zeal that is necessary and a duty, it is required that we be constant and persevering. "Esto fidelis ad mortem," said the Spirit of God to the angel of the church of Smyrna, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." For he that is warm to-day and cold to-morrow, zealous in his resolution and weary in his practices, fierce in the beginning and slack and easy in his progress, hath not yet well chosen what side he will be of.

OCT. 5

THE WICKED MAN AT JUDGMENT.

*"All that are in the graves . . . shall come forth;
. . . they that have done evil, unto the resurrection
of damnation."*—John v. 28, 29.

WHEN poor Attilius Aviola had been seized on by an apoplexy, his friends, supposing him dead, carried him to his funeral pile; but when the fire began to approach, and the heat to warm the body, he revived, and seeing himself encircled with funeral flames, called out aloud to his friends to rescue, not the dead, but the living Aviola from that horrid burning. But it could not be; he only was restored from his sickness to fall into death, and from his dull disease to a sharp and intolerable torment. Just so shall the wicked live again; they shall receive their souls, that they may be a portion for devils; they shall receive their bodies, that they may feel the everlasting burning; they shall see Christ, that they may "look on Him whom they have pierced;" and they shall hear the voice of God passing upon them the intolerable sentence; they shall come from their graves, that they may go into hell; and live again, that they may die for ever.

OCT. 8

A MIGHTY SYMBOL OF THE RESURRECTION.

"Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."—Job xiv. 12.

GOD, knowing that the great hopes of man, that the biggest endearment of religion, the sanction of private justice, the band of piety and holy courage, does wholly derive from the article of the resurrection, was pleased not only to make it credible, but easy and familiar to us; and so we converse every night with the image of death, that every morning we find an argument of the resurrection. Sleep and death have but one mother, and they have but one name in common.

Charnel-houses are but cemeteries or sleeping-places; and they that die are fallen asleep, and the resurrection is but an awakening and standing up from sleep: but in sleep our senses are as fast bound by nature as our joints are by the grave-clothes; and unless an angel of God awaken us every morning, we must confess ourselves as unable to converse with men as we now are afraid to die and to converse with spirits. But, however, death itself is no more; it is but darkness and a shadow, a rest and a forgetfulness.

OCT. 7

THE EARLY CHRISTIANS.

"All men glorified God for that which was done."—
Acts iv. 21.

EVERY thing was an argument for Christ's religion, and improved it; no objection could hinder it, no enemies destroy it; whatsoever was for them, it made the religion to increase; whatsoever was against them, made it to increase; sunshine and storms, fair weather or foul, it was all one as to the event of things: for they were instruments in the hands of God, who could make what Himself should choose to be the product of any cause; so that if the Christians had peace, they went abroad and brought in converts: if they had no peace, but persecution, the converts came in to them. In prosperity, they allured and enticed the world by the beauty of holiness; in affliction and trouble, they amazed all men with the splendour of their innocence and the glories of their patience; and quickly it was that the world became disciple to the glorious Nazarene, and men could no longer doubt of the resurrection of Jesus, when it became so demonstrated by the certainty of them that saw it, and the courage of them that died for it, and the multitude of them that believed it.

FRAILITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

"Lord, make me to know mine end; . . . that I may know how frail I am."—Psa. xxxix. 4.

US a worm creeping with its belly on the ground, with its portion and share of Adam's curse, lifts up its head to partake a little of the blessings of the air, and opens the junctures of its imperfect body, and curls its little rings into knots and combinations, drawing up its tail to a neighbourhood of its head's pleasure and motion; but still it must return to abide the fate of its own nature, and dwell and sleep upon the dust: so are the hopes of a mortal man. He opens his eyes, and looks upon fine things at a distance, and shuts them again with weakness, because they are too glorious to behold; and the man rejoices because he hopes fine things are staying for him; but his heart aches, because he knows there are a thousand ways to fail and miss of those glories; and though he hopes, yet he enjoys not; he longs, but he possesses not, and must be content with his portion of dust; and being "a worm, and no man," must lie down in this portion, before he can receive the end of his hopes, the salvation of his soul in the resurrection of the dead.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."—
Rom. viii. 2.

EVERY action of the life of Jesus, as it is imitable by us, is of so excellent merit, that, by making up the treasure of grace, it becomes full of assistances to us, and obtains of God grace to enable us to its imitation. For, as in the acquisition of habits the very exercise of the action does produce a facility to the action, and in some proportion becomes the cause of itself, so does every exercise of the life of Christ kindle its own fires. And Jesus becomes the fountain of spiritual life to us, as the prophet Elisha to the dead child: when he stretched his hands upon the child's hands, laid his mouth to his mouth, and formed his posture to the boy, and breathed into him, the spirit returned again into the child, at the prayer of Elisha. So when our lives are formed into the imitation of the life of the holiest Jesus, the Spirit of God returns into us.

MEDITATION.

"My meditation of Him shall be sweet."—Psa. civ. 34.

WE go to our prayers by chance, or order, or by determination of accidental occurrences ; and we recite them as we read a book ; and sometimes we are sensible of the duty, and a flash of lightning makes the room bright, and our prayers end, and the lightning is gone, and we are as dark as ever. We draw our water from standing pools, which never are filled but with sudden showers, and therefore we are dry so often : whereas, if we would draw water from the fountains of our Saviour, and derive them through the channel of diligent and prudent meditations, our devotion would be a continual current, and safe against the barrenness of frequent droughts. For meditation is an attention and application of spirit to divine things ; a searching out all instruments to a holy life, a devout consideration of them, and a production of those affections which are in a direct order to the love of God and a pious conversation. Indeed, meditation is all that great instrument of piety, whereby it is made prudent, and reasonable, and orderly, and perpetual.

A CAUTION AGAINST VAIN IMAGININGS.

"Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me."—Psa. cxxxi. 1.

MEDITATION is the duty of all ; and therefore God hath fitted such matter for it which is proportioned to every understanding ; and the greatest mysteries of Christianity are plainest, and yet most fruitful of meditation, and most useful to the production of piety. High speculations are as barren as the tops of cedars ; but the fundamentals of Christianity are fruitful as the valleys or the creeping vine. For, know that it is no meditation, but it may be an illusion, when you consider mysteries to become more learned, without thoughts of improving piety. Let your affections be as high as they can climb towards God, so your considerations be humble, fruitful, and practically mysterious. "Oh that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest," said David. The wings of an eagle would have carried him higher, but yet the innocent dove did furnish him with the better emblem to represent his humble design ; and lower meditations might sooner bring him to rest in God.

TRUE CONTRITION.

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit : a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."—Psa. li. 17.

IN the definition of contrition, all the schools of theology in the world that I know of put "the love of God." Contrition is not only sorrow, but a love of God too. Now this doctrine is not only an excellent doctrine, but will also do the whole business of this great question. Without contrition our sins cannot be pardoned. It is not contrition, unless the love of God be in it. Add then but these—Our love to God does not consist in an act of intuition or contemplation, nor yet directly and merely of passion; but it consists in obedience. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments :"—that is our love of God. So that contrition is a detestation of our past sin, and a consequent obedience to the Divine commandments : only as the aversion hath been, so must be the conversion. It is not one act of disobedience only which the habitual sinner is to be contrite for, but many; and therefore so must his contrition be a lasting hatred against sin, and an habitual love, that is, an habitual obedience to the Divine commandment.

OCT. 13

WORKING FOR ANOTHER'S SALVATION.

"He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."—James v. 20.

THERE is no greater charity in the world than to save a soul, nothing that pleases God better, nothing that can be in our hands greater or more noble, nothing that can be a more lasting and delightful honour, than that a perishing soul—snatched from the flames of an intolerable hell, and borne to heaven upon the wings of piety and mercy by the ministry of angels and the graces of the Holy Spirit—shall to eternal ages bless God and bless thee; Him for the author and finisher of salvation, and thee for the minister and charitable instrument. That bright star must needs look pleasantly upon thy face for ever, which was by thy hand placed there, and, had it not been for thy ministry, might have been a sooty coal in the regions of sorrow. God hath given us all some powers and ministries, by which we may promote the great interest of souls: counsels and prayers, preaching and writing, passionate desires and fair examples, going before others in the way of godliness, and bearing the torch before them, that they may see the way and walk in it.

PRAYER FOR THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH.

"I will build My church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—Matt. xvi. 18.



BLESSED Jesu, Prince of the catholic church, Thou art fairer than the children of men, Thy lips are full of grace, Thine armies mighty, Thy head is crowned with majesty, and clothed with worship and renown : have mercy upon Thy holy church ; bless her for ever with righteousness, and let the oil of gladness refresh her amidst the multitude of her sorrows and afflictions. And because she is the daughter of a king, and Thou takest pleasure in her beauty, let her not always be clothed in mourning garments, but let her be decked with exterior ornaments and secular advantages, such as may truly promote the interests of holy religion. Let kings and queens be nursing fathers and nursing mothers unto her ; and so let the sound of Thy gospel go into all the earth, that her children may be princes in all lands, and ministers of Thy kingdom, advancing Thy honour, and furthering the salvation of all men, for whom Thou didst give Thy precious blood, that all people may worship Thee, and give Thee thanks for ever.


DUTY TO OUR NEIGHBOUR.

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love."—Rom. xii. 10.

WAS it will be a strange arrest at the day of judgment to Dives, that he fed high and suffered Lazarus to starve, and every garment that lies by thee and perishes, while thy naked brother does so too for want of it, shall be a bill of indictment against thy unmerciful soul ; so it will be in every instance. In what thou couldst profit thy brother and didst not, thou art accountable ; and then tell over the times in which thou hast prayed for the conversion of thy sinning brother ; and compare the times together, and observe, whether thou hast not tempted him or betrayed him to sin, or encouraged him in it, or didst not hinder him, when thou mightest, more frequently than thou hast, humbly, and passionately, and charitably, and zealously bowed thy head and thy heart and knees to God to redeem that poor soul from hell, whither thou seest him descending with as much indifferency as a stone into the bottom of the well.

A PRAYER FOR GRACE.

"Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord."—1 Tim. i. 2.

 **MOST** merciful and gracious Lord, whose eyes are over the righteous, and Thine ears are open unto their prayers, give us, we beseech Thee, a contrite heart and an humble spirit, a fear of Thy name, a watchfulness over our tongue that we speak no guile, a care of our actions that we eschew all evil, and a zeal of Thy name that we may do good ; that being thus prepared with holy dispositions, we may be delivered out of all our troubles by the hands of Thy mercy, we may be defended against our enemies by the custody of angels, we may be provided for, so as to want no manner of thing that is good, by the ministration of Thy providence ; that so, in all the whole course of our life, we may feel the goodness of the Lord, seeing and tasting the sweetnesses of Thy mercy, which may be to us an antepast of eternity, and as an earnest of the Spirit to consign us to the fruition of the glories of Thy kingdom.

OVERCOMING EVIL HABITS.

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life."—1 Tim. vi. 12.

A VICIOUS habit makes our recovery infinitely difficult, our virtues troublesome, our restitution uncertain. In the beginnings of our return it is most visible. For even after we are entering into pardon and the favour of God, we are forced to fight for life, we cannot delight in God's service, or feel Christ's yoke so easy as of itself it is. For a vicious habit is a new concupiscence, and superinduces such contradictions to the supernatural contentions and designs of grace, and makes such new aptnesses, that the punishment remains even after the beginning of the sin's pardon: and that which is a natural punishment of the sinful actions is, or may be, morally a sin, as the lust which is produced by gluttony. And when a man hath entertained a holy sorrow for his sins, and made holy vows of obedience and a new life, he must be forced to contend for every act of duty, and he is daily tempted, and the temptation is strong, and his progression is slow; he marches upon sharp-pointed stones, where he was not used to go, and where he hath no pleasure.

PRAYER FOR SUSTAINING GRACE.

"God is our refuge and strength."—Psa. xli. 1.



ETERNAL God, Lord of heaven and earth, Father of men and angels, we do adore Thine infinite goodness, we revere Thy justice, and delight in Thy mercies, by which Thou hast dealt with us, not with the utmost right and dominion of a lord, but with the gentleness of a father; treating us like friends, who were indeed Thine enemies. Thou, O God, didst see our follies, and observe our weaknesses; Thou knewest the averseness of our nature to good, and our proneness to commit vanity; and because our imperfect obedience could not bring us to perfect felicity, whither Thou didst design us, the great God of all the world was pleased to make a new covenant with man, and to become a debtor to His servants. Blessed be God, and blessed be that mercy which hath done so great things for us. O be pleased to work that in us which Thou expectest from us. Let us not lose our title in the covenant of faith and repentance, by deferring the one or dishonouring the other; but let us walk worthy of our vocation, according to the law of faith, and the mercies of God, and the covenant of our Lord Jesus.

LITTLE SINS TO BE GUARDED AGAINST.

"Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"—
James iii. 5.

THE most trifling actions, the daily incursions of sins, though of the least malignity, yet if they be neglected, combine and knit together, till by their multitude they grow insupportable. Although capital sins invade you not, yet if your minutes, your small sins, which either we do not consider at all, or value not at all, be combined, or gathered into one heap, I know not what multitude of good works will suffice to weigh them down. For little sins are like the sand, and when they become a heap are heavy as lead; and a leaking ship may as certainly perish with the little inlets of water as with a mighty wave; for of many drops a river is made; and therefore, let not little sins be despised, for even those smallest things which creep upon us by our natural weakness, yet when they are gathered together against us, stand on a heap, and like an army of flies, can destroy us as well as any one deadly enemy.

THE TREE OF LIFE.

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life."—
Prov. xi. 30.

IT is observable that in the mentions of paradise by St. John he twice speaks of "the tree of life," but never of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil;" because this was the symbol of secular knowledge, of prudence and skill of doing things of this world, which we can naturally use; we may smell and taste them, but not feed upon them; that is, these are no part of our enjoyment; and if we be given up to the study of such notices, and be immersed in the things of this world, we cannot attend to the studies of religion and of the Divine service. But these cares and secular divertisements shall cease, when our souls are placed in paradise; there shall be no care taken for raising portions for our children, or to provide bread for our tables; no cunning contrivances to be safe from the crafty snare of an enemy; no amazement at losses, no fear of slanderings or of the gripes of publicans; but we shall feed on the tree of life, love of God, and longings for the coming of Christ: we are then all spirit, and our employment shall be symbolical,—that is, spiritual, holy, and pleasant.

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

"He that seeketh findeth."—Matt. vii. 8.

WHERE is there a man, but the more he studies and inquires, still he discovers nothing so clearly as his own ignorance? This is a demonstration that we are not in the right way, that we do not inquire wisely. If men did fall upon the right way, it were impossible so many learned men should be engaged in contrary parties and opinions. We have examined all ways but one, all but God's way. Let us, having missed in all the other, try this; let us go to God for truth; for truth comes from God only, and His ways are plain, and His sayings are true, and His promises "Yea and Amen." And if we miss the truth, it is because we will not find it; for certain it is, that all that truth which God hath made necessary, He hath also made legible and plain; and if we will open our eyes, we shall see the sun, and if we shall walk in the light, we shall rejoice in the light; only let us withdraw the curtains, let us remove the impediments, and the sin that doth so easily beset us. That is God's way.

PRAYER AND DUTY.

"Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart."—Jer. xxix. 13.

IF you will know how it is with you in the matter of your prayers, examine whether or no the form of your prayer be the rule of your life. Every petition to God is a precept to man; and when in your litanies you pray to be delivered from malice and hypocrisy, from pride and envy, from fornication and every deadly sin; all that is but a line of duty, and tells us that we must never consent to an act of pride, or a thought of envy, to a temptation of uncleanness, or the besmearings and evil paintings of hypocrisy. But we, when we pray against a sin, think we have done enough, and if we ask for a grace, suppose there is no more required. Now prayer is an instrument of help, a procuring auxiliaries of God, that we may do our duty; and why should we ask for help, if we be not ourselves bound to do the thing? Look not, therefore, upon your prayers as a short method of ease and salvation, but as a perpetual monition of duty.

SINS PARDONED ARE SINS
FORSAKEN.

"Let the wicked forsake his way: . . . and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him."—Isa. lv. 7.

NO man's sins are pardoned, but in the same measure in which they are mortified, destroyed, and taken away; so that if faith does not cure our sinful natures, it never can justify, it never can procure our pardon. And therefore it is, that as soon as ever faith in the Lord Jesus was preached, at the same time also they preached repentance from dead works: insomuch that St. Paul reckons it among the fundamentals and first principles of Christianity; nay, the Baptist preached repentance and amendment of life as a preparation to the faith of Christ. And, I pray, consider; can there be any forgiveness of sins without repentance? But if an apostle should preach forgiveness to all that believe, and this belief did not also mean that they should repent and forsake their sin, the sermons of the apostle would make Christianity nothing else but the sanctuary of Romulus, a device to get together all the wicked people of the world, and to make them happy without any change of manners.

PHARISAISM.

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. v. 20.

THE scribes and Pharisees placed their righteousness in negatives: they would not commit what was forbidden, but they cared but little for the included positive, and the omissions of good actions did not much trouble them; they would not hurt their brother in a forbidden instance, but neither would they do him good according to the intention of the commandment. It was a great innocence if they did not rob the poor,—then they were righteous men; but they thought themselves not much concerned to acquire that godlike excellency, a philanthropy and love to all mankind. Whosoever blasphemed God was to be put to death; but he that did not glorify God as he ought, they were unconcerned for him, and let him alone. He that spake against Moses, was to die without mercy; but against the ambitious and the covetous, against the proud man and the unmerciful, they made no provisions. They accounted themselves good, not for doing good, but for doing no evil; that was the sum of their theology.

OCT. 25

A PRAYER AGAINST WEARINESS IN WELL DOING.

"Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."—Gal. vi. 9.



MY God, merciful and gracious, my soul groans under the loads of its own infirmity; when my spirit is willing, my flesh is weak; my understanding foolish and imperfect, my will peevish and listless, my affections wandering after strange objects, my fancy wild and unfixed, all my senses minister to folly and vanity; and though they were all made for religion, yet they least of all delight in that. O my God, pity me, and hear me when I pray, and make that I may pray acceptably. Give me a love to religion, an unwearied spirit in the things of God. Let me not relish or delight in the things of the world, in sensual objects, and transitory possessions; but make my eyes look up to Thee, my soul be filled with Thee, my spirit ravished with Thy love, my understanding employed in the meditation of Thy law, all my powers and faculties of soul and body wholly serving Thee, and delighting in such holy ministries.

GRACES RATHER THAN GIFTS.

"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."—

2 Tim. ii. 1.

STRIVE rather for graces than for gifts, for affections in the way of virtue more than the overflowings of sensible devotion ; and, therefore, if thou findest any thing by which thou mayest be better, though thy spirit do not actually rejoice, or find any gust or relish in it, yet choose it greedily. For although the chief end of meditation be affection ; yet there is choice to be had of the affections ; and care must be taken that the affections be desires of virtue, or repudiations and aversions from something criminal ; not joys and transportations spiritual, comforts, and complacencies ; for they are no part of our duty. Sometimes they are encouragements, and sometimes rewards ; sometimes they depend upon habitude and disposition of body, and seem great matters when they have little in them ; are more bodily than spiritual, like the gift of tears.

OCT. 27

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH.


"I will glorify the house of My glory."—Isa. lx. 7.



THOU Shepherd of Israel, Thou that sittest upon the cherubims, stir up Thy strength, and come and help Thy people, that prayeth unto Thee for mercy and protection. Thou hast made affliction the portion of Thy children in this life; Thou feedest them with bread of tears, and givest them plenteousness of tears to drink: yet be pleased to show the light of Thy countenance upon us, to lighten our darknesses, to relieve our miseries, to heal our sicknesses, and let not Thy church become a strife unto her neighbours, but reunite her divisions, and make her not a prey to them that would devour her, and then laugh her to scorn. O Lord, hedge her about with Thy mercies, with the custody of angels, with the patronage of kings and princes, with the hearts and hands of nobles, and the defence of the whole secular arm; lest the wild beasts of the field pluck off her grapes, destroy the vintage, and root up the vine itself: but let her so flourish under the beams of Thy favour and providence, that it may take root, and spread, and fill all lands.

FASHIONABLE RELIGION.

"When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."—Matt. xiii. 21.

UR desires are very much to be suspected, if compliance and custom or reputation be the ingredients, and prevail above any better motive that can be observed. As force makes hypocrites, so favour and secular advantages make flatterers in religion ; and when a prince or ruler, a master of a family, or any one that hath power to oblige, is heartily religious, religion will quickly be in fashion. Those persons which come upon such inducements, are, by our blessed Saviour, signified by the parable of the corn that fell by the highway ; they presently receive it with joy ; and it springs quickly if the sun shines : but when persecution comes, they hang the head, and slack their pace, and appear seldom, and show that they had no depth of root. These men serve God when religion is rich and prosperous ; they come to Christ for the loaves, but care but little for the mystery. As long as the religion stays at this port, it is good for nothing ; and the very entry itself is suspicious.

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY.

"Faith, if it hath not works, is dead."—James ii. 17.

WHEN Eudamidas, the son of Archidamus, heard old Xenocrates disputing about wisdom, he asked very soberly, "If the old man be yet disputing and inquiring concerning wisdom, what time will he have to make use of it?" Christianity is all for practice; and so much time as is spent in quarrels about it, is a diminution to its interest. Men inquire so much what it is, that they have but little time left to be Christians. I remember a saying of Erasmus, "that when he first read the New Testament, with fear and a good mind, with a purpose to understand it and obey it, he found it very useful and very pleasant; but when, afterwards, he fell on reading the vast differences of commentaries, then he understood it less than he did before, then he began not to understand it:" for, indeed, the truths of God are best dressed in the plain culture and simplicity of the Spirit; but the truths that men commonly teach, are like the reflections of a multiplying-glass.

PRAYER AGAINST PRIDE.

"Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth."—1 Sam. ii. 3.



ETERNAL God, merciful and glorious, Thou art exalted far above all heavens; Thy throne, O God, is glory, and Thy sceptre is righteousness; Thy will is holiness, and Thy wisdom the great foundation of empire and government: I adore Thy majesty, and rejoice in Thy mercy, and revere Thy power, and confess all glory, and dignity, and honour, to be Thine alone, and theirs to whom Thou shalt impart any ray of Thy majesty, or reflection of Thy honour: but as for me, I am a worm and no man, vile dust and ashes, the son of corruption and the heir of rottenness, seized upon by folly, a lump of ignorance and sin, and shame and death.—What art Thou, O Lord? the great God of heaven and earth, the fountain of holiness and perfection infinite.—But what am I? so ignorant, that I know not what; so poor, that I have nothing of my own; so miserable, that I am the heir of sorrow and death; and so sinful, that I am encompassed with shame and grief.

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE.

"God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him."—Isa. xxviii. 26.

BLESSED be Thy name, O God, and blessed be Thy mercies, who hast preserved me this night from sin and sorrow, from sad chances and a violent death, from the malice of the devil, and the evil effects of my own corrupted nature and infirmity. The outgoings of the morning and evening shall praise Thee, and Thy servants shall rejoice in giving Thee praise for the operation of Thy hands. Let Thy providence and care watch over me this day, and all my whole life, that I may never be against Thee by idleness or folly, by evil company or private sins, by word or deed, by thought or desire ; and let the employment of my day leave no sorrow, or the remembrance of an evil conscience at night : but let it be holy and profitable, blessed and always innocent ; that when the days of my short abode are done, and the shadow is departed, I may die in Thy fear and favour, and rest in a holy hope, and at last return to the joys of a blessed resurrection, through Jesus Christ.

THE USES OF TEMPTATION.

"The Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."—Deut. xiii. 3.

THE Holy Spirit did drive Jesus into the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil. And though we are bound to pray instantly, that we fall into no temptation; yet if, by Divine permission, or by an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we be engaged in an action or course of life that is full of temptation, and empty of comfort, let us apprehend it as an issue of Divine Providence, as an occasion of the rewards of diligence and patience, as an instrument of virtue, as a designation of that way, in which we must glorify God; but no argument of disfavour, since our dearest Lord, the most holy Jesus, who could have driven the devil away by the breath of His mouth, yet was, by the Spirit of His Father, permitted to a trial and molestation by the spirits of darkness. And this is St. James's counsel: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

NOV. 2

THE RESURRECTION OF THE WICKED.

"The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire."—Matt. xiii. 49, 50.

WE have seen a poor condemned criminal, the weight of whose sorrows, sitting heavily upon his soul, hath benumbed him into a deep sleep, till he hath forgotten his groans, and laid aside his deep sighings; but on a sudden comes the messenger of death, and unbinds the poppy garland, scatters the heavy cloud that encircled his miserable head, and makes him return to acts of life, that he may quickly descend into death and be no more. So is every sinner that lies down in shame, and makes his grave with the wicked; he shall indeed rise again, and be called upon by the voice of the archangel; but then he shall descend into sorrows greater than the reason and the patience of a man, weeping and shrieking louder than the groans of the miserable children in the valley of Hinnom.

These, indeed, are sad stories, but true as the voice of God and the sermons of the holy Jesus. They are God's words and God's decrees; and I wish that all who profess the belief of these would consider sadly what they mean.

THE MYSTERY OF THE TRINITY.

"Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God."—Mark iv. 11.

HE that goes about to speak of and to understand the mysterious Trinity, and does it by words and names of man's invention, or by the mythology of numbers, by the cabala of letters, by the distinctions of the school, and by the weak inventions of disputing people ; if he only talks of essences and existences, hypostasies and personalities, distinctions without difference, and priority in co-equalities, and unity in pluralities, and of superior predicates of no larger extent than the inferior subjects ;—he may amuse himself, and find his understanding will be like St. Peter's upon the mount of Tabor at the transfiguration : he may build three tabernacles in his head, and talk something, but he knows not what. But the good man that feels the "power of the Father," and he to whom "the Son" is become "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ;" he in "whose heart the love of the Spirit of God is spread ;" to whom God hath communicated the "Holy Ghost, the Comforter ;"—this man, though he understands nothing of that which is unintelligible, yet he only understands the mysteriousness of the holy Trinity.

NOV. 4

THE FRIENDS OF GOD.

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."—Gen. v. 24.

THERE is a sort of God's dear servants who walk in perfectness, who "perfect holiness in the fear of God;" and they have a degree of Divine knowledge more than we can discourse of, and more certain than the demonstrations of geometry, brighter than the sun, and perfect as the light of heaven. This is called by the apostle the "brightness of God," manifested in the hearts of His dearest servants.

But I shall say no more of this at this time, for this is to be felt, and not to be talked of; and they that never touched it with their finger, may secretly, perhaps, laugh at it in their heart, and be never the wiser. All that I shall now say of it is, that a good man is united unto God, as a flame touches a flame, and combines into splendour and to glory: so is the spirit of a man united unto Christ by the Spirit of God. These are the friends of God, and they best know God's mind, and they only that are so, know how much such men do know.

THE WICKED MAN'S FOLLY.

"Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly."—Prov. xvii. 12.

EVEN those things which a good man and an evil man know, they do not know them both alike. A wicked man does know that good is lovely, and sin is of an evil and destructive nature; and when he is reprov'd, he is convinc'd; and when he is observ'd, he is ashamed; and when he has done, he is unsatisfi'd; and when he pursues his sin, he does it in the dark. Tell him he shall die, and he sighs deeply, but he knows it as well as you. Proceed, and say that after death comes judgment, and the poor man believes and trembles; he knows that God is angry with him; and if you tell him that for aught he knows he may be in hell to-morrow, he knows that it is an intolerable truth, but it is also undeniable. And yet, after all this, he runs to commit his sin with as certain an event and resolution as if he knew no argument against it: these notices of things terrible and true pass through his understanding as an eagle through the air; as long as her flight lasted, the air was shaken, but there remains no path behind her.

NOV. 6

HOLY INTENTIONS.

"Love one another with a pure heart."—1 Pet. i. 22.

IF a man visits his sick friend, and watches at his pillow for charity's sake, and because of his old affection, we approve it ; but if he does it in hope of legacy, he is a vulture, and only watches for the carcass. The same things are honest and dishonest : the manner of doing them, and the end of the design, makes the separation.

Holy intention is to the actions of a man that which the soul is to the body, or form to its matter, or the root to the tree, or the sun to the world, or the fountain to a river, or the base to a pillar : for without these the body is a dead trunk, the matter is sluggish, the tree is a block, the world is darkness, the river is quickly dry, the pillar rushes into flatness and a ruin ; and the action is sinful, or unprofitable and vain. The poor farmer that gave a dish of cold water to Artaxerxes was rewarded with a golden goblet ; and he that gives the same to a disciple in the name of a disciple, shall have a crown : but if he gives water in despite, when the disciple needs wine or a cordial, his reward shall be to want that water to cool his tongue.

OUR DEBT TO GOD.


"Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's ; and unto God the things that are God's."
—Matt. xxii. 21.

REMEMBER that Salvian, speaking of old men summing up their repentances, and making amends for the sins of their whole life, exhorts them to alms and works of piety ; but inquiring how much they should do towards the redeeming of their souls, answers with a little sarcasm, but plainly enough to give a wise man an answer : "A man," says he, "is not bound to give away all his goods, unless, peradventure, he owes all to God ; but, in that case, I cannot tell what to say ; for then the case is altered. A man is not bound to part with all his estate ; that is, unless his sins be greater than his estate ; but if they be, then he may consider of it again, and consider better. And he need not part with it all, unless pardon be more precious to him than his money, and unless heaven be worth it all, and unless he knows justly how much less will do it. If he does, let him try his skill, and pay just so much, and no more than he owes to God ; but if he does not know, let him be sure to do enough."

NOV. 8

OUR OFFERINGS TO GOD.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?"—Psa. cxvi. 12.

UT of all our estate we must take for religion and repentance such portions as the whole estate can allow ; so much as will consecrate the rest ; so much as is fit to bring when we pray for a great pardon, and deprecate a mighty anger, and turn aside an intolerable fear, and will purchase an excellent peace, and will reconcile a sinner. Now in this case a Christian is to take his measures according to the rate of his contrition and his love, his religion and his fear, his danger and his expectation, and let him measure his amends wisely ; his sorrow pouring in, and his fear thrusting it down, and it were very well if his love also would make it run over. For, deceive not yourselves, there is no other measure but this ; so much good as a man does, or so much as he would do, if he could—so much of religion, and so much of repentance he hath, and no more : and a man cannot ordinarily know that he is in a savable condition, but by the testimony which a divine philanthropy and a good mind always gives, which is to omit no opportunity of doing good in our several proportions and possibilities.

ONE SIN MAY SPOIL THE EFFECT OF ALL OUR VIRTUES.

"Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"—1 Cor. v. 6.

SOME men are very meek and gentle naturally, and that they serve God withal they pursue the virtue of their nature : that is, they tie a stone at the bottom of the well, and that is more than needs, the stone will stay there without that trouble ; and this good inclination will of itself easily proceed to issue. And, therefore, our care and caution should be more carefully employed in mortification of our natures, and acquisition of such virtues to which we are more refractory, and then cherish the other too, even as much as we please. Some are greatly bountiful to the poor, and love all mankind, and hurt nobody but themselves ; but it is a thousand pities to see such loving, good-natured persons to perish infinitely by one crime, and to see such excellent good things thrown away to please an uncontrolled and a stubborn lust ; but so do some escape out of a pit, and are taken in a trap at their going forth : and stepping aside to avoid the hoar-frost, fall into a valley full of snow.

HALF-FORMED CHRISTIANS.

"With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."—Rom. vii. 25.

IT happens in the mud and slime of the river Borborus, when the eye of the sun hath long dwelt upon it, it produces frogs and mice which begin to move a little under a thin cover of its own parental matter, and if they can get loose to live half a life, that is all; but the hinder parts, which are not formed before the setting of the sun, stick fast in their beds of mud, and the little moiety of a creature dies before it could be well said to live. So it is with those Christians who will do all that they think lawful, and will do no more than what they suppose necessary; they do but peep into the light of the Sun of righteousness; they have the beginnings of life; but their hinder parts, their passions and affections, and the desires of the lower man, are still unformed; and he that dwells in this state is just so much of a Christian as a sponge is of a plant, and a mushroom of a shrub.

GREAT AND LITTLE SINS.

"Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."—Matt. xxiii. 24.

MEN, in the matter of great sins and little, do as the magicians of Egypt : when Moses turned his rod into a serpent, it moved them not ; but when they saw the lice and the flies, then they were afraid. We see that, by the grace of God, we can escape great sins ; but we start at flies, and a bird out of a bush disorders us ; the lion in the way troubles us not, but a frog and a worm affright us. Remember the saying of St. Paul, "Christ came to redeem to Himself a church, and to present it, pure and spotless, before the throne of grace ;" and, if you mean to be of this number, you must endeavour to be under this qualification, that is, as Paul laboured to be, "void of offence, both towards God and towards man." It is necessary that all sin, great and little, should be mortified and dead in us, and that we no longer abide in that state of slavery, as to say, "The good that I would I do not ; but the evil that I would not, that I do."

GOD OUR WITNESS.

"The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts."—1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

GOD is especially present in the consciences of all persons, good and bad, by way of testimony and judgment. And although this manner of presence is, in this life, after the manner of this life, that is, imperfect, and we forget many actions of our lives; yet the greatest changes of our state of grace or sin, our most considerable actions, are always present, like capital letters to an aged and dim eye: and, at the day of judgment, God shall draw aside the cloud, and manifest this manner of His presence more notoriously, and make it appear that He was an observer of our very thoughts, and that he only laid those things by, which, because we covered them with dust and negligence, were not then discerned. But when we are risen from our dust and imperfection, they all appear plain and legible.

Now, the consideration of this great truth is of a very universal use in the whole course of the life of a Christian. All the consequents and affects of it are universal. He that remembers that God stands a witness and a judge, beholding every secrecy, besides his impiety, must have put on impudence, if he be not much restrained in his temptation to sin.

HUSBANDING OF OUR TIME FOR GOD.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things."—1 Tim. iv. 8.

IT is considerable, that the fruit which comes from the many days of recreation and vanity is very little; and, although we scatter much, yet we gather but little profit: but from the few hours we spend in prayer and the exercises of a pious life, the return is great and profitable; and what we sow in the minutes and spare portions of a few years, grows up to crowns and sceptres in a happy and a glorious eternity. Therefore, although it cannot be enjoined that the greatest part of our time be spent in the direct actions of devotion and religion, yet it will become, not only a duty, but also a great providence, to lay aside, for the services of God and the businesses of the Spirit, as much as we can; because God rewards our minutes with long and eternal happiness; and the greater portion of our time we give to God, the more we treasure up for ourselves; and "no man is a better merchant than he that lays out his time upon God, and his money upon the poor." There is no one minute of our lives (after we are come to the use of reason) but we are or may be doing the work of God, even then when we most of all serve ourselves.

BEARING GOD IN MIND.

"The upright shall dwell in Thy presence."—
Psa. cxl. 13.

IF we walk with God in all His ways, as He walks with us in all ours, we shall find perpetual reasons to enable us to keep that rule of God, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." And this puts me in mind of a saying of an old religious person, "There is one way of overcoming our ghostly enemies ; spiritual mirth, and a perpetual bearing of God in our minds." This effectively resists the devil, and suffers us to receive no hurt from him. This exercise is apt, also, to enkindle holy desires of the enjoyment of God, because it produces joy, when we do enjoy Him ; the same desires that a weak man hath for a defender ; the sick man, for a physician ; the poor, for a patron ; the child, for his father ; the espoused lover, for her betrothed. From the same fountain are apt to issue humility of spirit, apprehensions of our great distance and our great needs, our daily wants and hourly supplies, admiration of God's unspeakable mercies : it is the cause of great modesty and decency in our actions ; it helps to recollection of mind, and restrains the scatterings and looseness of wandering thoughts.

THE TRINITY PROVED BY EXPERIENCE.

"To him that knocketh it shall be opened."—

Matt. vii. 8.

THAT hath passed from his childhood in grace, under the spiritual generation of the Father, and is gone forward to be a young man in Christ, strong and vigorous in holy actions and holy undertakings, and from thence is become an old disciple, and strong and grown old in religion and the conversation of the Spirit; this man best understands the secret and undiscernable economy, he feels this unintelligible mystery, and sees with his heart what his tongue can never express, and his metaphysics can never prove. In these cases faith and love are the best knowledge, and Jesus Christ is best known by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; and if the kingdom of God be in us, then we know God, and are known of Him; and when we communicate of the Spirit of God, when we pray for Him, and have received Him, and entertained Him, and dwelt with Him, and warmed ourselves by His holy fires,—then we know Him too: but there is no other satisfactory knowledge of the blessed Trinity but this.

THE LOVE OF VIRTUE.


"Glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good."—Rom. ii. 10.

HE loves virtue for God's sake and its own that loves and honours it wherever it is to be seen ; but he that is envious or angry at a virtue that is not his own, at the perfection or excellency of his neighbour, is not covetous of the virtue, but of its reward and reputation ; and then his intentions are polluted. It was a great ingenuity in Moses that wished all the people might be prophets ; but if he had designed his own honour, he would have prophesied alone. But he that desires only that the work of God and religion shall go on, is pleased with it, whosoever is the instrument.

He that despises the world, and all its appendant vanities, is the best judge, and the most secured of his intentions : because he is the furthest removed from a temptation. Every degree of mortification is a testimony of the purity of our purposes ; and in what degree we despise sensual pleasure, or secular honours, or worldly reputation, in the same degree we shall conclude our heart right to religion and spiritual designs.

THE NEW LAW OF CHRIST.

"Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed."—Rom. vi. 6.

HRIST hath taught us more, and given us more, and promised to us more, than ever was in the world known or believed before Him ; and by the strengths and confidence of these, thrusts us forward in a holy and wise economy ; and plainly declares that we must serve Him by the measures of a new love, do him honour by wise and material glorifications, be united to God by a new nature, and made alive by a new birth, and fulfil all righteousness ; to be humble and meek as Christ, to be merciful as our heavenly Father is, to be pure as God is pure, to be partakers of the Divine nature, to be wholly renewed in the frame and temper of our mind, to become people of a new heart, a direct new creation, new principles, and a new being, to do better than all the world before us ever did, to love God more perfectly, to despise the world more generously, to contend for the faith more earnestly. For all this is but a proper and a just consequent of the great promises, which our blessed Lawgiver came to publish and effect for all the world of believers and disciples.

WHAT CHRIST REQUIRES OF US.

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."—John iv. 24.

THE Pharisees did well, and we must do better; their houses were marble, but our roofs must be gilded and fuller of glory. But as the matter is very great, so the necessity of it is the greatest in the world. It must be so, or it will be much worse: unless it be thus, we shall never see the glorious face of God. Here it concerns us to be wise and fearful; for the matter is not a question of an oaken garland, or a circle of bays, and a yellow riband: it is not a question of money or land; nor of the vainer rewards of popular noises, and the undiscerning suffrages of the people, who are contingent judges of good and evil: but it is the great stake of life eternal. We cannot be Christians, unless we be righteous by the new measures: the righteousness of the kingdom is now the only way to enter into it; for the sentence is fixed, and the Judge infallible, and the decree irreversible.

LITTLE SINS.

"Take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness."—Luke xi. 35.

WHAT man of ordinary prudence and reputation can be tempted to steal? or, for what price would he be tempted to murder his friend? If we did hate all sins as we hate these, would it not be as easy to be as innocent in other instances as most men are in these? and we should have as few drunkards as we have thieves. In such as these, we do not complain in the words of my text, "What I would not, that I do; and what I would, I do not." Does not every good man overcome all the power of great sins? and can he, by the Spirit of God and right reason, by fear and hope, conquer Goliath, and beat the sons of the giant; and can he not overcome the children of Gath? Or is it harder to overcome a little sin than a great one? Are not the temptations to little sins very little? and yet, are they greater and stronger than a mighty grace? Could the poor demoniac, that lived in the graves, by the power of the devil break his iron chains in pieces? and cannot he, who hath the Spirit of God, dissolve the chains of sin?

EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY.

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh."—
Gal. v. 24.

THE righteousness evangelical is the same with that which the ancients called "to live an apostolical life;" that was the measure of Christians; "men that desired to please God;" that is, as Apostolius most admirably describes it, men who are curious of their very eyes, temperate in their tongue, of a mortified body, and an humble spirit, pure in their intentions, masters of their passions; men who, when they are injured, return honourable words; when they are lessened in their estates, increase in their charity; when they are abused, they yet are courteous, and give entreaties; when they are hated, they pay love; men that are dull in contentions, and quick in loving-kindnesses, swift as the feet of Asahel, and ready as the chariots of Amminadib. True Christians are such as are crucified with Christ, and dead unto all sin, and finally place their whole love on God, and, for His sake, upon all mankind. This is the description of a Christian, and the true state of the righteousness evangelical.


OUR DAILY BREAD.

"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them."—Matt. vi. 26.

THOU, O God, which takest care of our souls, do not despise our bodies, which Thou hast made and sanctified, and designed to be glorious. But now we are exposed to hunger and thirst, nakedness and weariness, want and inconvenience, "Give unto us neither poverty nor riches, but feed us with food convenient for us," and clothe us with fitting provisions, according to that state and condition where Thou hast placed Thy servants; that we may not be tempted with want, nor made contemptible by beggary, nor wanton or proud by riches, nor in love with any thing in this world; but that we may use it as strangers and pilgrims, as the relief of our needs, the support of our infirmities, and the oil of our lamps, feeding us till we are quite spent in Thy service. Lord, take from Thy servants sad carefulness, and all distrust, and give us only such a proportion of temporal things as may enable us with comfort to do our duty.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT.

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit."—Rom. viii. 5.

 T. Chrysostom said : "The fire and water can never mingle ; so neither can sensuality and the watchfulness and wise discerning of the Spirit."—When the wicked governor asked of Christ concerning truth, Christ gave him no answer. He was not fit to hear it. He, therefore, who so understands the words of God, that he not only believes, but loves the proposition ; he who consents with all his heart, and being convinced of the truth, does also apprehend the necessity, and obeys the precept, and delights in the discovery, and lays his hand upon his heart, and reduces the notices of things to the practice of duty ; he who dares trust his proposition, and drives it on to the utmost issue, resolving to go after it whithersoever it can invite him ; this man walks in the Spirit ; at least thus far he is gone towards it ; his understanding is brought "into the obedience of Christ." This is a "loving God with all our mind ;" and whatever goes less than this is but memory, and not understanding ; or else such notice of things by which a man is neither the wiser nor the better.

TALKING AND DOING.

*"There are many unruly and vain talkers. . . .
They profess that they know God; but in works
they deny Him."*—Titus i. 10, 16.

HE that does not practise as well as he talks, and do what he desires, and what he ought to do, confesses himself to sin greatly against his conscience; and it is a prodigious folly to think that he is a good man, because though he does sin, yet it was against his mind to do so. Some men talk like angels, and pray with fervour, and meditate with deep recesses, and speak to God with loving affections, and words of union, and adhere to Him in silent devotion, and when they go abroad are as passionate as ever, peevish as a frightened fly, vexing themselves with their own reflections: they are cruel in their bargains, unmerciful to their tenants, and proud as a barbarian prince: they are, for all their fine words, impatient of reproof, scornful to their neighbours, lovers of money, supreme in their own thoughts, and submit to none; all their spiritual life they talk of is nothing but spiritual fancy and illusion; they are still under the power of their passions, and their sin rules them imperiously, and carries them away infallibly.

NOV. 24

THE POWER OF FAITH.

"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down."—Heb. xi. 30.

TH E that hath faith like a grain of mustard-seed, can remove mountains; the mountains of sin shall fall flat at the feet of the faithful man, and shall be removed into the sea, the sea of Christ's blood, and penitential waters. "Faith overcometh the world," saith St. John; and "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." There are two of our enemies gone,—the world and the flesh, by faith and the Spirit, by the spirit of faith; and as for the devil, put on the shield of faith, and "resist the devil, and he will flee from you," saith the apostle; and the powers of sin seem insuperable to none, but to them that have not faith. We do not believe that God intends we should do what He seems to require of us; or else we think that though God's grace abounds, yet sin must superabound, expressly against the saying of St. Paul; or else we think that the evil spirit is stronger than the good Spirit of God. Hear what St. John saith: "My little children, ye are of God, and have overcome the evil one; for the Spirit that is in you is greater than that which is in the world."

VAIN DISPUTATIONS.

"Take no heed unto all words that are spoken."—
Eccl. vii. 21.

IF the Spirit of God be our teacher, we shall learn to avoid evil and to do good, to be wise and to be holy, to be profitable and careful; and they that walk in this way, shall find more peace in their consciences, more skill in the Scriptures, more satisfaction in their doubts, than can be obtained by all the polemical and impertinent disputations of the world. No, no; the man that is wise—he that is conducted by the Spirit of God—knows better in what Christ's kingdom does consist, than to throw away his time and interest, and peace and safety, for what? for religion? no: for the body of religion? not so much: for the garment of the body of religion? no, not for so much; but for the fringes of the garment of the body of religion; for such, and no better, are the disputes that trouble our discontented brethren; they are things, or rather circumstances and manners of things, in which the soul and spirit are not at all concerned.

DALLYING WITH TEMPTATION.

"Evil communications corrupt good manners."—

1 Cor. xv. 33.

THERE are some men more in love with the temptation than with the sin ; and because this rushes against the conscience rudely, and they see death stand at the end of the progression, therefore they only love to stand upon Mount Ebal and view it. They resolve they will not commit the sin, they will not be overcome, but they would fain be tempted. If these men will but observe the contingencies of their own state, they shall find that when they have set the house on fire, they cannot prescribe its measures of burning. But there is a secret iniquity in it. For he that loves to stand and stare upon the fire that burnt him formerly, is pleased with the warmth and splendour, and the temptation itself hath some little correspondences to the appetite. He will not enter into the house, because it is infected with the plague, but he loves to stand at the door, and fain would enter if he durst ;—it is impossible that any man should love to abide by a temptation for a good end.

THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH.

"I know that Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living."—Job xxx. 23.

IT is glorious and brave when a Christian contemplates those glories which stand at the foot of the account of all God's servants ; but when we consider that, before all or any thing of this happens, every Christian must twice "put off the old man," and then lie down in dust and the dishonours of the grave, there is "myrrh put into our wine ;" it is wholesome, but it will allay all our pleasures of that glorious expectation ; but no man can escape it. After that the great Cyrus had ruled long in a mighty empire, yet there came a message from heaven, not so sad it may be, yet as decretory as the handwriting on the wall that arrested his successor Darius, "Prepare thyself, O Cyrus, and then go unto the gods." He laid aside his tire and his beauteous diadem, and covered his face with a cloth, and in a single linen laid his honoured head in a poor humble grave. And none of us all can avoid this sentence.

NOV. 28

PRAYER AGAINST OUR ENEMIES, TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL.

"O my God, I trust in Thee: . . . let not mine enemies triumph over me."—Psa. xxv. 2.



MOST merciful Jesu, Thou art the Saviour of them that put their trust in Thee, defend us and deliver us from the hands of all our enemies: and although they are a sword of thine, and an instrument sent from Thee to chastise us for our sins, yet arise, O Lord, in mercy and strength; disappoint them and cast them down, lest they destroy our souls; that when Thou hast visited us with Thy fatherly correction, and tried us like as silver is tried, Thou mayest find no wickedness in us. Sanctify our hearts and lips, that we may not think a thought displeasing unto Thee, and that our mouth may not offend. Keep us as the apple of an eye; hide us under the shadow of Thy wings of mercy and providence: keep us from the ways of the destroyer, and hold up our goings in Thy paths, that we may persevere in righteousness, and our footsteps may not slip; that, in the day of the resurrection of the just, we may behold Thy presence, and receive infinite satisfaction in the vision beatifical.

RELIGION IS FOR EVERY DAY.

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."—
Luke ix. 23.

HE that puts on fine clothes for one day or two, must not suppose himself to be that prince which he only personates. We dress ourselves upon a day of religion, and then we cannot endure to think on sin; and if we do, we sigh; and when we sigh, we pray, and suppose that if we might die upon that day, it would be a good day's work, for we could not die in a better time. But let us not deceive ourselves. That is our picture that is like us every day in the week: and if you are as just in your buying and selling as you are when you are saying your prayers; if you are as chaste in your conversation as you are in your religious retirement; if your temperance be the same every day as it is in your thoughts upon a fasting-day; if you wear the same habits of virtue every day in the week as you put on upon a communion-day, you have more reason to think yourself prepared than by all the extempore piety and solemn religion, that rises at the sound of a bell, and keeps her time by the calendar of the church more than by the laws of God.

A RULE FOR THE PENITENT.

"Take ye heed, watch and pray."—Mark xiii. 33.

AT the beginning of his recovery, let the penitent be armed by special cautions against the labours and difficulties of the restitution : and consider, that if sin be so pleasant, it is the habit that hath made it so ; it is become easy and natural by the custom. And therefore so may virtue. And complain not that nature helps and corroborates the habits of sin : for besides that nature doth this mischief but in some instances, not in all ; the grace of God will as much assist the customs and labours of virtue as nature doth the habits of vice. And choose whether you will. Take any institution or course of life ; let it at first be never so violent, use will make it pleasant. And therefore we may make virtue as certain as vice is, as pleasing to the spirit, as hard to be removed, as perfective of our nature as the other is destructive ; and make it by custom as impossible to be vicious, as we now think it difficult and impossible to overcome flesh and blood.

THE IMPERFECT CHRISTIAN.

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—1 Cor. x. 12.

HE that hath mortified his carnal appetite, and is proud of his conquest : or prays often, and reproaches him that does not ; and gives alms, and secretly undervalues him that cannot ; or is of a right opinion, but curses him that is of the wrong ; or leaves his ambitious pursuits and vain-glorious purposes, but sits at home and is idle ;—is like a man who stands by a fire in a wide and a cold room ; he scorches on one side, and freezes on the other ; whereas the habits of virtue are like a great mantle, and the man is warm and well all over. But it is an ill cure for the ague to fall into a fever, or to be eased of sore eyes by a diversion of the rheum upon the lungs. And that soul that turns her back upon one sin, and her face to another, is, it may be, weary of the instance, but not of the iniquity ; and, rolling upon an uneasy bed of thorns, chooses only to be tormented in another part.

FALSE RELIGIOUS DESIRES.

*"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
 . . . ye outwardly appear righteous unto men,
 but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."*
 —Matt. xxiii. 27, 28.

WE find that all men pretend that they have earnest desires to be saved ; and very many, espying the beauties of wisdom, the brightness of chastity, the health of temperance, the peace of meek persons, and the reputation and joy of the charitable, wish that they were such excellent persons. But they consider not that it is the splendour, not the virtue ; the reputation, not the usefulness ; the reward, and not the duty,—that they are in love withal. But this can never make our duty pleasant ; we can never be heartily reconciled for the things of God as long as we feel smart and pain in the ministries of religion : we suffer religion, and endure the laws of God ; but we love them not. He that comes to God, whether he will or no, confesses the greatness of God and the demonstrations of religion, but sees no amiability or comeliness in it, and shall find as little of the reward.

PRAYER FOR A PORTION IN GOD.

"I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."—
John xiv. 20.



LORD God, who art loving unto all Thy church, even unto all such as are of a clean heart,—give us hearts humble and merciful, that we may never be holden with pride, nor overwhelmed with cruelty; and sanctify our words and lips, that we may never blaspheme Thy holiness, nor our talking be ever against Thee or Thy honour. O God most highest, give unto us such religious and mortified affections, that we may never thirst after the temporal advantages and prosperities of the wicked: set not our feet in slippery places, lest we be suddenly cast down, and have our portion in the lot of the wicked, who perish and come to a fearful end: guide us with Thy counsel, that we, holding us fast by Thee, and putting our trust in Thee, O God, Thou mayest be the strength of our hearts, the hope of our souls, and the ground of all the confidence and content in this life, and after this life is ended, Thou mayest receive us with glory, and be our portion for ever; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

LEARNING NOT NECESSARY TO THE CHRISTIAN.

"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise."—I Cor. i. 27.

IT was a saying of Ægidius, "that an old and a simple woman, if she loves Jesus, may be greater than was brother Bonaventure." Want of learning, and disability to consider great secrets of theology, do not at all retard our progress to spiritual perfections; love to Jesus may be better promoted by the plainer understandings of honest and unlettered people, than by the finer and more exalted speculations of great clerks, that have less devotion. For although the way of serving God by the understanding be the best and most lasting, yet it is not necessary the understanding should be dressed with troublesome and laborious notions. The reason that is in religion is the surest principle to engage our services, and more perpetual than the sweetnesses and the motives of affection; but every honest man's understanding is then best furnished with the discourses and the reasonable parts of religion, when he knows those mysteries of religion upon which Christ and His apostles did build a holy life, and the superstructures of piety. Those are the best materials of his meditation.

PRACTICAL RELIGION BETTER THAN TRANSCENDENTAL.

*"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly,
and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy
God?"—Micah vi. 8.*

IT was an excellent desire of St. Bernard, who was as likely as any to have such altitudes of speculation, if God had really dispensed them to holy and religious persons: "I pray God grant to me peace of spirit, joy in the Holy Ghost, to compassionate others in the midst of my mirth, to be charitable in simplicity, to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to mourn with them that mourn; and with these I shall be content: other exaltations of devotion I leave to apostles and apostolic men; the high hills are for the harts and the climbing goats; the stony rocks, and the recesses of the earth, for the conies." It is more healthful and nutritive to dig the earth, and to eat of her fruits, than to stare upon the greatest glories of the heavens, and live upon the beams of the sun: so unsatisfying a thing is rapture and transportation to the soul; it often distracts the faculties, but seldom does advantage piety, and is full of danger in the greatest of its lustre.

CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same.”—

Col. iv. 2.

WISE men do not often cut their fingers, and yet every day they use a knife ; and a man's eye is a tender thing, and every thing can do it wrong, and every thing can put it out ; yet, because we love our eyes so well, in the midst of so many dangers, by God's providence, and a prudent natural care, by winking when any thing comes against them, and by turning aside when a blow is offered, they are preserved so certainly, that not one man in ten thousand does, by a stroke, lose one of his eyes in all his lifetime. If we would transplant our natural care to a spiritual caution, we might, by God's grace, be kept from losing our souls, as we are from losing our eyes ; and, because a perpetual watchfulness is our great defence, and the perpetual presence of God's grace is our great security, and that this grace never leaves us unless we leave it, and the precept of a daily watchfulness is a thing not only so reasonable, but in so many easy ways to be performed,—we see upon what terms we may be quit of our sins.

MORTIFICATION OF SIN.

"If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."—Rom. viii. 13.

IF you would be in the state of the liberty of the sons of God, that is, that you may not be servants of sin in any instance, be sure, in the mortifications of sin, willingly or carelessly to leave no remains of it, no nest-egg, no principles of it, no affections to it ; if any thing remains, it will prove to us as manna to the sons of Israel on the second day ; it will breed worms, and stink. Therefore, labour against every part of it, reject every proposition that gives it countenance, pray to God against it all. And what then ? Why then, "ask, and you shall have," said Christ. Nay, say some, it is true, you shall be heard, but in part only ; for God will leave some remains of sin within us, lest we should become proud, by being innocent. Will a physician purposely leave the relics of a disease, and pretend he does it to prevent a relapse ? And is it not more likely he will relapse, if the sickness be not wholly cured ?

GOD'S GLORY TO BE REVEALED HEREAFTER.

"I knew a man in Christ . . . (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."—2 Cor. xii. 2-4.

US a man staring upon the broad eye of the sun at his noon of solstice, feels his heat, and dwells in light, and loses the sight of his eyes, and perceives nothing distinctly; but the organ is confounded, and the faculty amazed with too big a beauty: so was St. Paul in his ecstasy. He saw that he could see nothing to be told below, and he perceived the glories were too big for flesh and blood, and that the beauties of separate souls were not to be understood by the soul in conjunction; and, therefore, after all the fine things that he saw, we only know what we knew before, that the soul can live when the body is dead; that it can subsist without the body; that there are very great glories reserved for them that serve God; that they who die in Christ shall live with Him; that the body is a prison, and the soul is in fetters, while we are alive; and that when the body dies, the soul springs and leaps from her prison, and enters into the first liberty of the sons of God.

THE GREAT DAY OF JUDGMENT.

Watch ye therefore, . . . that ye may be accounted worthy . . . to stand before the Son of man."—
Luke xxi. 36.

THOU must leave thy rich land, and thy well-built house, and thy pleasing wife; and of all the trees of thy orchard or thy wood, nothing shall attend thee to the grave, but oak for thy coffin, and cypress for thy funeral. It shall not then be inquired how long thou hast lived, but how well. None below will be concerned whether thou wert rich or poor, but all the spirits of light and darkness shall be busy in the scrutiny of thy life; for the good angels would fain carry thy soul to Christ; and if they do, the devils will follow, and accuse thee there; and when thou appearest before the righteous Judge, what will become of thee, unless Christ be thy advocate, and God be merciful and appeased, and the angels be thy guards, and a holy conscience be thy comfort? There will to every one of us come a time, when we shall with great passion and great interest inquire, how have I spent my days, how have I laid out my money, how have I employed my time, how have I served God, and how repented me of my sins?

GOD'S HATRED OF SIN.

"The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth."—
Psa. xxxiv. 16.

EVERY sin, even the smallest, is against charity, which is the end of the commandment. For every sin or evil of transgression is far worse than all the evils of punishment with which mankind is afflicted in this world ; and it is a less evil that all mankind should be destroyed, than that God should be displeased in the least instance that is imaginable. Now if we esteem the loss of our life or our estate, the wounding our head, or the extinction of an eye, to be great evils to us, and him that does anything of this to us to be our enemy, or to be injurious, we are to remember that God hates every sin worse than we can hate pain or beggary. And if a nice and a tender conscience, the spirit of every excellent person, does extremely hate all that can provoke God to anger or to jealousy ; it must be certain that God hates every such thing with a hatred infinitely greater, so great, that no understanding can perceive the vastness and immensity of it.

THE CIRCLE OF CHRISTIAN GRACES.

"By works a man is justified, and not by faith only."
—James ii. 24.

A MAN is not of a contrite heart as soon as he hath exercised one act of contrition. He that goes to break a rock, does something towards it by every blow, but every blow does not break it. A man's heart is not so easily broken; I mean broken from the love of sin, and its adherence to it. But suppose the heart be broken, and that the man is contrite, there is more to be done. God indeed does not despise this, but he requires more. God did not despise Ahab's repentance, but it did not do all his work for him. He does not despise patience, nor meekness, nor resignation, nor hope, nor confession, nor anything that Himself commands. But He that commands all, will not be content with one alone; every grace shall have its reward, but it shall not be crowned alone. Faith alone shall not justify, and repentance alone, taken in its specifical, distinctive sense, shall not suffice; but faith, and repentance, and charity, and patience, and the whole circle and rosary of graces and duties, must adorn our heads.

THE GROWTH OF EVIL HABITS.

"Some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits; . . . having their conscience seared with a hot iron."—1 Tim. iv. 1, 2

HE that is used to it, makes nothing of sacrilege, who before started at the defrauding his neighbour of an uncertain right : but when he hath digested the first iota, by step and step he ventures so far till he dares to steal the thunderbolts from Jupiter. When sin is grown up to its height and station by all its firmest measures, a great sin is not felt ; and let the sin be what it will, many of the instances pass so easily, that they are not observed : as the hands and feet sometimes obey the fancy, without the notice of the superior faculties ; and as we say some parts of our prayers which we are used to, though we attend not ; and as musicians strike many single strokes, upon which they do not at all consider ; which indeed is the perfection of a habit. So we see many men swear when they know not that they do so ; they lie, and know they lie, and yet believe themselves.

FREQUENT PRAYER.


"I will therefore that men pray every where."—

1 Tim. ii. 8.

NONE are so unwilling to pray as they that pray seldom; for they that do pray often, and with zeal, and passion, and desire, feel no trouble so great as when they are forced to omit their holy offices and hours of prayers. It concerns the devil's interest to keep us from all the experience of the rewards of a frequent and holy prayer; and so long as you will not try and "taste how good and gracious the Lord is" to the praying man, so long you cannot see the evil of your coldness and lukewarm state. But if you would but try, though it be but for curiosity's sake, and inform yourselves in the vanity of things, and the truth of pretences, and the certainty of theological propositions, you should find yourselves taken in a golden snare, which will tie you to nothing but felicity, and safety, and holiness, and pleasure.

PRAYER FOR PARDON.

"Hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy servants."—1 Kings viii. 36.

 MOST glorious God, I tremble to come into thy presence, so polluted and dishonoured as I am by my foul stain of sin which I have contracted; but I must come, or I perish. O my God, I cannot help it now; miserable man that I am, to reduce myself to so sad a state of things, that I neither am worthy to come unto Thee, nor dare I stay from Thee: miserable man that I am, who lost that portion of innocence which, if I should pay my life in price, I cannot now recover. O dear God, I have offended Thee my gracious Father, my Lord, my Patron, my Judge, my Advocate, and my Redeemer. Shame and sorrow are upon me, for so offending Thee, my gracious Saviour. But glory be to Thee, O Lord, who art such to me who have offended Thee. It aggravates my sin, that I have sinned against Thee, who art so excellent in Thyself, who art so good to me: but if thou wert not so good to me, though my sin would be less, yet my misery would be greater. The greatness of my crime brings me to my remedy; and now I humbly pray Thee to be merciful to my sin, for it is very great.

RESTRAINT UPON ANGER.

"If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."—Matt. vi. 15.

IF we be tempted to anger in the actions of government and discipline to our inferiors (in which case anger is permitted so far as it is prudently instrumental to government, and only is a sin when it is excessive and unreasonable, let us propound to ourselves the example of God the Father, who, at the same time and with the same tranquillity, decreed heaven and hell, the joys of blessed angels and souls, and the torments of devils and accursed spirits; and at the day of judgment, God shall not be at all inflamed or shaken in His essential seat and centre of tranquillity and joy. And if at first the cause seems reasonable, yet defer to execute thy anger till thou mayest better judge. For, as Phocion told the Athenians, who upon the first news of the death of Alexander were ready to revolt, "Stay a while, for if the king be not dead, your haste will ruin you; but if he be dead, your stay cannot prejudice your affairs, for he will be dead to-morrow as well as to-day:" so, if thy servant or inferior deserve punishment, staying till to-morrow will not make him innocent; but it may possibly preserve thee so, by preventing thy striking a guiltless person, or being furious for a trifle.

PRAYER THAT WE MAY LEAD A HOLY LIFE.

"The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God."—Gal. ii. 20.



MOST mighty God, who art more pleased with the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and the oblation of our souls in the vows of obedience and a holy life, than with the burnt-offerings and sacrifices of bullocks and goats, let Thy grace reform our lives and manners : keep our mouth from slander and obloquy, from guile and deceit : let us never consent to actions of injustice and uncleanness, that we partake not with thieves or with adulterers either in their sin or punishment ; that when Thou shalt appear in perfect beauty, with a consuming fire before Thee, and a tempest round about Thee, with terrors and glorious majesty, calling the heavens and the earth together, that Thou mayest judge all Thy people, Thou mayest gather us among Thy saints, and give us the mercies and the portion of Thine inheritance, that so we may honour Thee by an eternal oblation of praise and thanksgiving in the heavens, where Thou, O God, declarest Thy salvation to all Thy elect people ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GOD GLORIFIED IN OUR REPENTANCE.

*"The Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself
in Israel."*—Isa. xliv. 23.

AS repentance does contain in it all the parts of holy life, which can be performed by a returning sinner (all the acts and habits of virtue being but parts, or instances, or effects of repentance); so all the actions of a holy life do constitute the mass and body of all those instruments, whereby God is pleased to glorify Himself. For if God is glorified in the sun and moon, in the rare fabric of the honeycombs, in the discipline of bees, in the economy of pismires, in the little houses of birds, in the curiosity of an eye, God being pleased to delight in those little images and reflexes of Himself from those pretty mirrors, which, like a crevice in the wall, through a narrow perspective, transmit the species of a vast excellency: much rather shall God be pleased to behold Himself in the glasses of our obedience, in the emissions of our will and understanding; these being rational and apt instruments to express Him, far better than the natural, as being nearer communications of Himself.

MERCY ENJOINED UPON US.

"The merciful man doeth good to his own soul."—
Prov. xi. 17.

GOD hath bound mercy upon us by the iron bands of necessity, and though God's mercy is the measure of His justice, yet justice is the measure of our mercy; and as we do to others, it shall be done to us, even in the matter of pardon and of bounty, of gentleness and remission, of bearing each other's burdens, and fair interpretation; "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," so we pray. The final sentence in this affair is recorded by St. James, "He that shows no mercy, shall have justice without mercy." As thy poor brother hath groaned under thy cruelty and ungentle nature without remedy, so shalt thou before the throne of God; thou shalt pray, and plead, and call, and cry, and beg again, and in the midst of thy despairing noises be carried into the regions of sorrow, which never did and never shall feel a mercy. God never can hear the prayers of an unmerciful man.

PRAYER WITHOUT DESIRE.

"Blessed are they that . . . seek Him with the whole heart."—Psa. cxix. 2.

WE pray for a contrition and a broken heart ; and yet, if we chance to be melancholy, we long to be comforted, and think that the lectures of the cross bring death, and therefore are not the way of eternal life. We pray sometimes that God may be first and last in all our thoughts ; and yet we conceive it no great matter whether He be or no ; but we are sure that He is not, but the things of the world do take up the place of God, and yet we hope to be saved for all that, and, consequently, are very indifferent concerning the return of that prayer. We frequently call upon God for His grace, that we may never fall into sin ; now in this, besides that we have no hopes to be heard, and think it impossible to arrive to a state of life in which we shall not commit sins, yet if we do sin, we know there is a remedy so ready, that we believe we are not much the worse if we do. Here are prayers enough : but where are the desires all this while ?

DEC. 20

A PRAYER FOR THE GIFT OF HOLY OBEDIENCE.

"Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."—
Matt. xi. 29.



LORD and blessed Saviour Jesus, by whose obedience many became righteous, and reparations were made of the ruins brought to human nature by the disobedience of Adam; Thou camest into the world with many great and holy purposes concerning our salvation, and hast given us a great precedent of obedience, which, that Thou mightest preserve to Thy heavenly Father, Thou didst neglect Thy life, and becamest obedient even to the death of the cross. O, let me imitate so blessed an example, and, by the merits of Thy obedience, let me obtain the grace of humility and abnegation of all my own desires in the clearest renunciation of my will; that I may will and refuse in conformity to Thy sacred laws and holy purposes; that I may do all Thy will cheerfully, choosingly, humbly, confidently, and continually; and Thy will may be done upon me with much mercy and fatherly dispensation of Thy providence.

STEADFAST PIETY.


"The word of the Lord endureth for ever."—

1 Pet. i. 25.

RELIGION is worth as much to-day as it was yesterday, and that cannot change though we do; and if we do, we have left God, and whither he can go that goes from God, his own sorrows will soon enough instruct him. This fire must never go out, but it must be like the fire of heaven, it must shine like the stars, though sometimes covered with a cloud, or obscured by a greater light; yet they dwell for ever in their orbs, and walk in their circles, and observe their circumstances, but go not out by day nor night, and set not when kings die, nor are extinguished when nations change their government. So must the zeal of a Christian be, a constant incentive of his duty; and though sometimes his hand is drawn back by violence or need, and his prayers shortened by the importunity of business, and some parts omitted by necessities and just compliances, yet still the fire is kept alive; it burns within when the light breaks not forth, and is eternal as the orb of fire, or the embers of the altar of incense.

THE EFFECTS OF PIOUS
MEDITATIONS.

"These are they which . . . hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit."—Mark iv. 20.

UR natural affections are not worthy the entertainments of a Christian; they must be supernatural and divine that put us into the hopes of perfection and felicities: and these other, that are good, unless they come by meditation, they are but accidental, and set with the evening sun. But if they be produced upon the strengths of pious meditation, they are as perpetual as they are reasonable, and excellent in proportion to the piety of the principle. A garden that is watered with short and sudden showers is more uncertain in its fruits and beauties, than if a rivulet waters it with a perpetual distilling. And just such are the short emissions and unpremeditated resolutions of piety, begotten by a dash of holy rain from heaven, whereby God sometimes uses to call the careless but to taste what excellences of piety they neglect; but if they be not produced by the reason of religion, and the philosophy of meditation, they have but the life of a fly or a tall gourd; they come into the world only to say they had a being.

RIGHTEOUSNESS THE BEST HELP TO UNDERSTANDING GOD.

"They that seek the Lord understand all things."—
Prov. xxviii. 5.

A GOOD life is the best way to understand wisdom and religion, because, by the experiences and relishes of religion, there is conveyed to them such a sweetness, to which all wicked men are strangers. There is in the things of God, to them which practise them, a deliciousness that makes us love them, and that love admits us into God's cabinet, and strangely clarifies the understanding by the purification of the heart. For when our reason is raised up by the Spirit of Christ, it is turned quickly into experience; when our faith relies upon the principles of Christ, it is changed into vision; and so long as we know God only in the ways of man—by contentious learning, by arguing and dispute—we see nothing but the shadow of Him; and in that shadow we meet with many dark appearances, little certainty, and much conjecture. But when we know Him with the eyes of holiness, and the intuition of gracious experiences, with a quiet spirit and the peace of enjoyment; then we shall hear what we never heard, and see what our eyes never saw.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS.

"I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously."—Exod. xv. 1.

A RELIGION that gave countenance to the poor and pitiful, in a time when riches were adored, and ambition and pleasure had possessed the heart of all mankind; a religion that would change the face of things, and the hearts of men, and break vile habits into gentleness and counsel; that such a religion, in such a time, by the sermons and conduct of fishermen, men of mean breeding and illiberal arts, should so speedily triumph over the philosophy of the world, and the arguments of the subtle, and the sermons of the eloquent; the power of princes and the interests of states, the inclinations of nature and the blindness of zeal, the force of custom and the solicitation of passions, the pleasures of sin and the busy arts of the devil; that is, against wit and power, superstition and wilfulness, fame and money, nature and empire, which are all the causes in this world that can make a thing impossible; this, this is to be ascribed to the power of God, and is the great demonstration of the resurrection of Jesus.

THE FINITE MEASURING THE INFINITE.

"Canst thou by searching find out God?"—Job xi. 7.

ARE our opinions of the power of God so low, that our understanding must be His measure; and He shall be confessed to do nothing, unless it be made plain in our philosophy? Certainly we have a low opinion of God, unless we believe He can do more things than we can understand. But let us hear St. Paul's demonstration; if the corn dies and lives again; if it lays its body down, suffers alteration, dissolution, and death,—but at the spring, rises again in the verdure of a leaf, in the fulness of the ear, in the kidneys of wheat; if it proceeds from little to great, from nakedness to ornament, from emptiness to plenty, from unity to multitude, from death to life—be a Sadducee no more, shame not thy understanding, and reproach not the weakness of thy faith, by thinking that corn can be restored to life, and man cannot; especially since in every creature, the obediential capacity is infinite, and cannot admit degrees; for every creature can be any thing under the power of God, which cannot be less than infinite.

REVERENCE FOR THE SACRAMENTS.

"Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."—1 Cor. x. 21.

INDEED the sun shines upon the good and bad ; and the vines give wine to the drunkard as well as to the sober man : pirates have fair winds and a calm sea, at the same time when the just and peaceful merchantman hath them. But although the things of this world are common to good and bad, yet sacraments and spiritual joys, the food of the soul, and the blessing of Christ, are the peculiar right of saints ; and the rites of our religion are to be handled by the measures of religion, and the things of God by the rules of the Spirit ; and the sacraments are mysteries, and to be handled by mystic persons, and to be received by saints. And therefore, whoever will partake of God's secrets, must first look into his own. He must pare off whatever is amiss, and not without holiness approach to the holiest of all holies, nor eat of this sacrifice with a defiled head, nor come to this feast without a nuptial garment, nor take this remedy without a just preparative.


WEAKNESS OF OUR BEING.

"The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak."—
Mark xiv. 38.

WE are as water, weak, and of no consistence, always descending, abiding in no certain place, unless where we are detained with violence ; and every little breath of wind makes us rough and tempestuous, and troubles our faces ; every trifling accident discomposes us ; and, as the face of the waters wasting in a storm, so wrinkles itself, that it makes upon its forehead furrows deep and hollow like a grave ; so do our great and little cares and trifles first make the wrinkles of old age, and then they dig a grave for us : and there is in nature nothing so contemptible, but it may meet with us in such circumstances, that it may be too hard for us in our weaknesses ; and the sting of a bee is a weapon sharp enough to pierce the finger of a child or the lip of a man ; and those creatures which nature hath left without weapons, yet they are armed sufficiently to vex those parts of men, which are left defenceless and obnoxious to a sunbeam, to the roughness of a sour grape, to the unevenness of a gravel stone, to the dust of a wheel.

GOD IS OUR PORTION.

" Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord."—Psa. xxv. 15.

NE man will die for his friend, and another will die for his money : some men hate to be a rebel, and will die for their prince ; but tempt them to suffer for the cause of the church, in which they were baptized, and in whose communion they look for heaven, and then they are tempted and fall away. Or if God hath chosen the cause for them, and they have accepted it, yet themselves will choose the suffering. Right or wrong, some men will not endure a prison ; and some that can, yet choose the heaviest part of the burden, the pollution and stain of a sin, rather than lose their money ; and some had rather die twice than lose their estate once. In this our rule is easy. Let us choose God, and let God choose all the rest for us ; it being indifferent to us, whether by poverty or shame, by a lingering or a sudden death, by the hands of a tyrant prince, or the despised hands of a base usurper or a rebel, we receive the crown, and do honour to God and to religion.

THE SUPPER OF THE LAMB.

"Man shall not live by bread alone."—Matt. iv. 4.

AS Christ is the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world, so He shall be the food of our souls in heaven, where they who are accounted worthy shall sit down and be feasted in the eternal supper of the Lamb; concerning which blessedness our blessed Saviour saith, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." For he hath appointed to His chosen ones to eat and drink at His table in His kingdom: plainly teaching us, that by eating and drinking Christ is meant in this world to live the life of the Spirit, and in the other world it is to live the life of glory. Here we feed upon duty, and there we feed upon reward; our wine is here mingled with water and with myrrh, there it is pure and unmixed; but still it is called meat and drink, and still is meant grace and glory, the fruits of the Spirit and the joy of the Spirit; that is, by Christ we here live a spiritual life, and hereafter shall live a life eternal.

DANGERS BESETTING YOUNG
CONVERTS.

"Let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God."—Eccl. v. 2.

MOST commonly, young beginners are zealous and high, and not so easily tempted to a recession, till after a long time, by a revolution of affections, they are abated by a defervescency in holy actions. The devil uses to prompt them on ; not that he loves the piety and the progress, but that he would engage the person in imprudences, and such forwardness of expressions, which either are in their own nature indiscretions, or from which, by reason of the incapacity of the person, it is necessary for him to retire. A new convert is like a bird newly entered into a net, through which possibly she might pass without danger, if her fears and unreasonable strivings did not entangle her ; but when, by busy and disturbed flutterings, she discomposes the order of it, she is entangled and unpenned, and made a prey to her treacherous enemy. Such are the indiscreet strivings and too forward enterprises of new penitents ; whom we shall observe too often undertaking great austerities, making vows, and casting bands upon their liberty.

MINUTE MEDITATIONS ON CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS.

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings."—
Phil. iii. 9, 10.

HOLY meditation produces the passions and desires it intends; it makes the objects present and almost sensible; it renews the first passions by a fiction of imagination; it passes from the paschal parlour to Cedron, it tells the drops of sweat, and measures them, and finds them as big as drops of blood, and then conjectures at the greatness of our sins; it fears in the midst of Christ's agonies, it hears His groans, it spies Judas's lantern afar off, it follows Jesus to Gabbatha, and wonders at His innocence and their malice, and feels the strokes of the whip, and shrinks the head when the crown of thorns is thrust hard upon His holy brows; and, at last, goes step by step with Jesus, and carries part of the cross, and is nailed fast with sorrow and compassion, and dies with love. For if the soul be the principle of its own actions, it can produce the same effects by reflex acts of the understanding, when it is assisted by the imaginative part, as when it sees the thing acted: only let the meditation be as minute, particular, and circumstantiate as it may.

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